

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES ETC. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S THREE-DAY HUNT; OR, THE RAIDERS OF RED RAVINE.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



Arietta was busy assisting to get the breakfast ready. Crouching upon a rock a few feet away was a catamount, poised to spring upon her. Wild quickly recovered from his surprise and his rifle flew to his shoulder, and he pressed the trigger as it leaped.

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S THREE-DAY HUNT

OR,

The Raiders of Red Ravine

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE TRAVELERS IN DISTRESS.

"I reckon we've struck a place where game is thick, and since we are going to cross a long desert stretch after we leave here I propose that we put in a three day's hunt and stock up with what game we will need to carry us through. We have plenty of time on our hands, anyhow, and so long as we get to Phoenix by Christmas it will be all right."

The speaker was Young Wild West, the Prince of the Saddle and Champion Deadshot of the West, and his remarks were addressed to his partners and the girls.

At the time of which we write, which was a few years ago, that part of our country known as the Wild West was less inhabited and frequented than it is now.

Young Wild West, though but a boy in years, had made a name for himself not only as a daring scout, but as an all-around Westerner, who was ever ready to lend a hand in hunting down lawless bands of outlaws and bad Indians.

Having struck it rich at the Black Hills when he was scarcely fifteen years of age, he possessed plenty of money to allow him to travel about the country in search of adventure, and to pursue his policy to help those who were not able to help themselves.

But so much has been written about our dashing young hero that he hardly needs an introduction.

Suffice it to say that he was cool under all circumstances, quick as a panther, and his bravery, tact and daring were unquestioned, by even his worst enemies.

His two partners referred to were Cheyenne Charlie, an ex-Government scout, and Jim Dart, a Western boy about his own age.

All three had been born and reared in the Wild West, and consequently they were well experienced in woodcraft, riding and shooting.

The girls, as our hero and his partners always spoke of them, were Anna, the wife of Cheyenne Charlie; Arietta Murdock, the charming golden-haired sweetheart of our hero, and Eloise Gardner, the sweetheart of Jim Dart.

The latter two were only in their teens—children yet, some might say—but they had learned to love the outdoor life they had been leading for the past two years, while the dangers they came in contact with did not have the terrors to them that might be supposed.

Of the three, Arietta was the only one who had been raised in the West. She had been born at a little settlement in Wyoming during the troublous times with the Indians, and hence she had been brought up to handle a rifle and revolver in true Western style.

But Anna and Eloise had learned to do this quite well since they had cast their lot with adventurous Young Wild West and his partners, and though they did not possess the courage and skill of Arietta, they were well advanced in the art of self-defense.

As Young Wild West spoke the words recorded at the opening of our story the party had come to a hat in a picturesque little glen, situated in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, not more than a hundred miles from the mining town of Silver City, New Mexico.

The sun was sinking in the west on a cool day in December, and our friends had selected the glen as a place to camp for the night.

"A three days' hunt would be fine, I think, Wild," answered the pretty sweetheart of the young deadshot. "And this is just the place to make our headquarters, too."

"Just what I was thinking when I spoke, Et," was the

reply. "We won't go too far back in the glen, for it is rather gloomy back there where the water is tumbling down the rocks. The thick trees above shut off the sun entirely. Right here is the spot, I think. What do the rest of you say?"

"Jest ther place, as sure's yer live, Wild!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, as he brushed back his long, black hair and gave the ends of his mustache a twist. "There's ther water back there, an' here's ther grass—as good as any I've ever seen in these parts—fur ther horses. A three days' hunt is all right. Hoorav! Whoopee! Whoopee! Wow!"

The scout dismounted as soon as he had given vent to his feelings, and then he looked at his wife, as though he thought she might question his sanity for having let himself out in true cowboy fashion, and he perfectly sober, too.

But Anna only smiled.

She had got used to the rough and boisterous ways of her husband, and whenever he chose to be noisy now she took it for granted that he was enjoying himself.

Jim Dart and Eloise promptly declared themselves as pleased with the proposition, so Young Wild West dismounted and, turning to the two Chinamen they had with them as servants, he called out:

"Here you are, Hop and Wing! We are going to stop right here. It is going to be for three days, too, so you can fix up things accordingly."

"Allee light, Mislér Wild."

The two Celestials, who were brothers, and looked very much alike, answered as if in one voice.

Then they dismounted and promptly proceeded to unload the two pack horses they had been leading.

They knew just what to do, for many times had they pitched the camp, and in all sorts of places, from pleasant spots, like the one they had struck now, to bleak sand ridges on the desert.

The girls were on the ground almost as soon as our hero, and they turned to and proceeded to unsaddle their horses.

There were two steeds in the bunch that were bound to attract particular attention.

They were those Young Wild West and his charming sweetheart always rode.

The dashing young deadshot's was a splendid sorrel stallion called Spitfire, and Arietta's was a cream-colored mustang she had named Snow Flake.

When she came in possession of the animal, which was but a few months before, it was but a colt, and was almost snow white. Hence the name.

Since that time, however, the white had turned to a cream color, but the name clung to the animal.

Wild had been lucky with his horse, for he had been riding him for three years, and never once had the intelligent sorrel failed him.

When the two steeds were galloping side by side, with the dashing young deadshot and his sweetheart mounted upon them, their long hair streaming in the wind, they made a picture that was not only pleasing, but thrilling.

The rest of the party had been unfortunate about keep-

ing their horses, but they always managed to get good ones to replace those that got shot in skirmishes they had with Indians and renegade white men.

As soon as the horses were properly taken care of our friends turned and helped the Chinamen to put up the two tents and get the camp in shape.

It did not take so very long to do this, since everything was right where their hands could be placed upon it.

The two pack horses managed to carry their outfit all right, and there were some prospecting tools belonging to it, too, for our friends never lost the opportunity to look for gold and silver.

In this way they had made many rich strikes, so there was really as much profit as there was pleasure in their travels.

In half an hour after they came to a halt the camp was in order, and as the sun was now sinking beyond the undulating top of a distant range, they all concluded that it was time for supper.

Wing, who was the chief cook of the party, at once kindled a fire, without having to be told, for he knew, as well as they did, what was in order now.

Then the work of getting the supper ready was begun.

The girls generally gave the cook a lift, especially when it was a little later than the usual time for them to eat, and they now turned in and help him.

It was not long before the fragrant aroma of coffee was floating on the mountain air, and then the sizzling of the venison steaks that were being broiled could be heard, making music to the ears of Cheyenne Charlie, who always seemed to be more hungry than any of the rest.

But there was more than coffee and venison steaks to go with the supper, for Anna had been busy mixing up a batch that she was now converting into small cakes and frying them in bacon grease in the big frying pan.

When they were cooked they would be as fine corn-dodgers as any one had ever tasted; all hands were ready to declare that much.

It did not take long to fry them, either, and as the scout's wife had made enough so the second panful would be getting done while the first was being devoured there was going to be no shortage.

The supper progressed rapidly—the cooking of it, we should say—and just as they were going to sit down and eat they heard the sounds of approaching horses.

Instantly Young Wild West and his partners were on the alert.

They came across all sorts of people in their travels, and they did not know whether those approaching might prove to be friends or foes.

It was always best to be on the safe side, so they prepared themselves to meet foes.

The next minute three horses came into view, their riders being a rather elderly man, a young woman and a darky, who was undoubtedly a servant.

They all bore a frightened look, especially the woman and the darky, and when they beheld the little camp and the expectant faces of our friends they showed signs of relief.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed the young woman. "I believe we have found friends, Harris."

"Yes, Minerva," the man answered, "we have, for I can see that these are honest people."

"Tank de Lor' fo' dat!" cried the darky, rolling his eyes and nodding vigorously.

"My friends, you are a little out of your latitude, I reckon," spoke up Young Wild West, as he walked out to meet them. "What is the trouble?"

"We were held up by seven masked men about an hour ago, and all our money and valuables were taken from us," said the man, as he dismounted. "They cleaned us out completely, and then they forced us to leave the trail and ride off through the woods, laughing harshly at us and threatening to shoot at us as we went. I am mighty glad we came this way, now that we have struck friends."

"Well, I don't doubt that you are glad, my friend. You are just in time for supper, too. Come on; you are welcome."

"Who is the boy, Harris?" the woman asked, turning to the man, who was evidently her husband, and acting as though she would not feel just right without an introduction.

"My name is Young Wild West, madam," our hero quickly answered. "I reckon you needn't be afraid of me, or any of the rest of us. We are not road agents, or anything like them."

"She knows that, Young Wild West. Now I'll tell you who we are. My name is Harris Hooper, and this is my wife."

"Your English wife, Harris," corrected the woman, flashing a glance of wounded pride upon him.

"That's all right, Minerva," was the rather curt retort. "We don't want to talk about that now. I've heard all about Young Wild West, and I know pretty well that it wouldn't make any difference to him whether it was the Queen of England or a common Comanche squaw who came to him in distress. We're out of England now, and we're all on the same footing."

"I wish I was back in England. Then I would have never lost my diamonds," retorted the woman, a bit sarcastically, as she dismounted.

CHAPTER II.

THE RAIDERS OF RED RAVINE.

At the very time that Harris Hooper and his wife were telling the story of what had happened to them seven horsemen were riding slowly through what was called Red Ravine, which was about five miles distant from the camp of our friends.

The trail that led from Alkali Flat to Silver City went right through the ravine, which, from the red sandstone that showed up so plentiful on its sides, had been called Red Ravine.

It was a cut of several miles, too, so no matter if the way was a little rough through the irregular split that opened the ridge for three or four miles, travelers were glad to put it to use.

There was not a great deal of traveling between Silver City and Alkali Flat, especially, but there were two or

three mining camps that had just opened up on the way, and a couple of ranches near the source of the Gila, so these made the trail quite well put to use, and it was hardly a day that at least one person did not ride over some part of it.

The seven men just mentioned were those who had held up and robbed Hooper and his English wife.

They had made a fine haul, so they all declared, and they were now riding through the ravine to the headquarters they had established there.

None of them wore masks now, for they only concealed their faces when they were at work, and as they rode along they might have been taken for a party of cowboys on the way to town from their ranch.

They laughed and jested at the expense of their late victims, and Big Barton, the leader, declared that a few more hauls like the one just made would enable them to remain quiet for a while.

"That was about the silliest thing I ever seen in petticoats," he remarked. "She was mighty scared, but she didn't fidget ter put on a lot of lugs, though. Made out as though she was better ter be robbed than any one else. But them diamonds we took from her ears, an' that ring I yanked from her finger is worth money, boys, an' lots of it. Yer can't fool me on diamonds. I've seen lots of 'em in my time. We'll git rid of them stones in Santa Fe all right. There ain't no hurry about it, since we got more'n eight thousand dollars in cash from ther man. He didn't seem ter be so very much put out about it, either, which means that he knows where ter git more. Why, ther galoot even told his wife ter stop goin' on so, as he would buy her more diamonds. Ha, ha, ha! But that was a regular circus while it lasted."

"It sartinly were, Barton," spoke up a villainous-looking fellow on his left, who bore the high-sounding title of Bolivar Pete, the "Cute One," and who was a sort of lieutenant for the leader. "It are too bad that we didn't take more'n we did. We oughter let that galoot go away in his shirt sleeves, while ther hat ther woman had on would have come in handy fur my wife. They was jest too easy fur anything, an' I'm sorry I didn't think afore of takin' some of their clothes."

"Oh, I reckon we got enough as it was," answered Big Barton.

"Well, I s'pose we did. But I would have been mighty pleased ter be able ter give Mag that fancy hat ther Englishwoman had on. She was English, she said, an' she seemed ter be mighty proud of it."

"Well, if she ever gits back to her own bloomin' country, she kin make ther galoots there open their eyes when she tells 'em how ther Raiders of Red Ravine lifted her diamonds an' took all her husband's money. They never heard of sich doin's there, I reckon."

"Oh, yes, they did," spoke up one of the others, who had evidently read something of English history. "They used ter have highwaymen in England thicker than fleas on a dog onct. But that was a long time ago, though."

"What do you know about it, Wince?" asked Bolivar Pete, contemptuously. "Yer never have been as fur east as ther Missippy."

"Well, I was teacht how ter read when I was young, an' I've read considerable books that I've come across

now an' then. I reckon I know putty well what I'm talkin' about. Why, it was from readin' about a galoot named Dick Turpin that first gave me ther idee that I'd like ter be a highwayman. He was a great English thief, he was! In this country they don't call highwaymen an' raiders an' sich like heroes; they calls 'em villains, an' it's ther heroes what gits after 'em, an' generally they git cleaned up, too, 'cordin' to ther stories."

"Well, if it happens that any of them heroes you're talkin' about comes along an' tackles ther Raiders of Red Ravine it's them what will git cleaned up, an' not us."

"I reckon so," said the man called Wince, while the others nodded their approval.

There was one thing about the band of raiders, as they chose to call themselves, and that was that they possessed the utmost confidence in their ability to take care of themselves.

It had been near the north end of the ravine where they had held up Hooper, and their headquarters was near the other end, over four miles away.

But the distance was soon covered, and soon the raiders were riding through a narrow pass to the left, which opened into a little valley of not more than an acre in extent, and was surrounded on all sides by almost perpendicular cliffs.

Trees and shrubbery were plentiful here, too, and in the midst of a small grove was a log shanty that was about thirty feet long and probably twelve in width.

It was here where Bolivar Pete had located some months before.

With his wife he had come from Santa Fe, after being driven out of that place because of being implicated in a murder.

What her husband lacked in villainy she made up, and he was supposed to be a very clever one.

It had not taken Bolivar Pete long to get acquainted with Big Barton, who was a terror around the mining camps, and when he had suggested that he had a fine hiding place just off Red Ravine, a band was soon formed for the purpose of making raids upon ranches and robbing whom they might come in contact with.

For over a month the business had been great with the raiders, and they were in very high feather over it.

But the holdup they had just made paid them far better than anything else they had yet tackled, and when they rode in single file through the narrow pass into the little valley the faces of all hands were illumined with smiles.

Mag, the wife of the lieutenant of the band, was standing in the doorway, her arms akimbo, when they rode up and dismounted.

One look at the woman, who was well along toward middle age, would have convinced the close observer that the blood of the Mexican, as well as that of the Indian, flowed in her veins.

Her black, beadlike eyes were piercing, and when she turned them upon the faces of the men more than one felt a cold chill come over him.

The fact was that they all had a great deal of respect, if not a feeling of fear, for the woman, her husband included.

"Well, I reckon somethin's happened ter tickle you galoots," she said, raising her eyes in a questioning way.

"I should reckon so, Mag," answered Big Barton. "We robbed an Englishwoman of some diamonds a little while ago."

"An Englishwoman!" echoed the woman.

"Yes, and a mighty soft an' peevish one, too, Mag," her husband put in. "I wish you could have seen her. You would have laughed yourself hoarse."

As the woman was seldom known to laugh at anything, there was considerable doubt about this, even in the mind of the speaker.

"Let's see them diamonds," she said, as they came to the cabin.

"Big Barton has got 'em, Mag. We're goin' ter take 'em ter Santa Fe some time an' turn 'em inter money."

"Lemme see 'em, Bart."

The leader hesitated, but it was evident that he did not wish to get into a quarrel with the wife of his lieutenant, so he produced the jewels he had taken from the woman.

The eyes of Mag sparkled when she saw the gems, which really were worth an amount that went up into the thousands, for, as uncouth as she was, she seemed to know the value of precious stones.

"I reckon they'll do fur me," she said, and then she went to a closet and, getting a piece of paper, she wrapped them carefully and placed them in the pocket of her gown.

The captain shrugged his shoulders, at the same time casting a reproachful look at Bolivar Pete.

But that worthy simply shook his head, meaning, no doubt, that it was not his fault that Mag found out about the diamonds.

"All right, Mag," Big Barton said, after a pause. "If you think them stones is worth more than ther money they'll bring, keep 'em fur a while. They are worth considerable, I s'pose, an' some time we might need ther money more'n we do now."

"Oh, I'll take care of 'em, an' don't furgit that!" was the reply. "Now, I s'pose you galoots want your supper. It's about ready, so when yer git your horses 'tended ter yer kin sit down."

She went right at work preparing the meal, just as though she had not suddenly come into possession of the diamonds.

The villains took it gracefully, for there was really nothing else to do.

Mag was indispensable to them, for she was a good cook and kept the log cabin clean and neat.

So much for the Raiders of Red Ravine for the present.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. HOOPER'S FIRST EXPERIENCE IN A CAMP.

Young Wild West and his friends were not a little amused at the way Mrs. Harris Hooper went on.

Cheyenne Charlie even laughed; but he had never been brought up to associate with people of her standing in society, so he could be excused for it.

"I reckon yer might be able ter git hold of your sparkers ag'in, missus," he said, nodding in a way that was meant to give her encouragement. "We'll try an' catch these galoots what held yer up. We've made up our minds ter have a three days' hunt, but I reckon we kind find time ter do a little in ther line of findin' ther galoots. Ain't that right, Wild?"

"That's right, Charlie," answered our hero.

"We thank you for saying that, gentlemen," spoke up Hooper, who was very much pleased at the reception they had got. "You see, my wife is not used to the ways of the West yet. When she has lived here a while she will be different. I met her over in England, and before we got married she seemed delighted at the prospect of coming over here and studying the wildness of nature, as she put it. My interests are here, so she will try hard to get used to it."

"I am afraid I never can, though, Harris," spoke up the woman. "The very idea! Why, I don't know how the ladies here can stand such a place as this!"

"Come on and have supper with us," said Wild, changing the subject. "There is no use in letting the grub get cold. We will try and attend to the masked thieves for you. But we will wait until morning before we start in. You can make yourselves comfortable here, I reckon."

"Comfortable!" echoed Mrs. Hooper, as she looked around and shivered at the sight of the rocks and trees. "I——"

"You've got to make the best of it, Minerva," said her husband, speaking a bit sharply. "You know that we had lost our way, and even if we had not been robbed and then came across these good people we would have been in a far worse position. Just make the best of it, and don't forget to give Young Wild West and his friends the thanks that are due them."

That wilted the woman, for the time, anyhow.

She seemed ashamed of herself, and tried her best to make her company agreeable to the girls.

But they had seen and heard just enough of her to make them feel a bit disgusted; however, they were not the sort to show it.

It was noticed by all that the English lady had a pretty good appetite after she had started in, and Charlie called out to her encouragingly:

"Fill in, Missus Hooper! Whoop her up! There's plenty more grub where this come from. We'll have venison an' bear meat by ther hundred weight by to-morrow night this time. We're goin' ter have a three days' hunt, an' fur has got ter fly!"

Hooper laughed heartily when he saw his wife hold up her hands in dismay at the way the scout talked.

"That's the way the real good people of the West talk, my dear," he explained. "That man has got a heart as big as an ox, and I'll bet on it! He'd do anything to please us. You see how he enjoys seeing you eat. For my part, this is the best I have sat down to since we put up at the shanty hotel in Alkali Flat last week."

Minerva, as he called her, smothered her feelings and kept right on eating, and a warning glance from Anna caused the scout to remain silent during the rest of the meal.

The darky servant was taking his rations with the two Chinamen, and he seemed to be enjoying himself.

As the meal progressed they all got better acquainted, and our friends learned that Hooper owned quite a part of Silver City, and was interested in different mining enterprises in the vicinity.

His wife had been called an excellent horsewoman in England, so she had not objected when he proposed that they take a fifty-mile ride from Silver City to a small mining camp that lay off to the left of it.

But they had lost their way, and the result was that they reached a ravine, through which the trail ran, just as the shades of night were at hand.

They did not know exactly where they were at first, but Hooper had soon recognized the place as Red Ravine, part of the Alkali Flat trail.

He was doing considerable worrying before the masked men appeared, for he knew that they could not hope to reach a place to put up at that night.

When the raiders finished their work he was in a state of despair, and he had about made up his mind to give it up and stop at the first convenient spot.

Then they came upon the camp of Young Wild West and his friends.

Mrs. Hooper got in a very good humor by the time the supper was over, and she entertained the girls by relating how different things were in her country.

It was almost like reading a story book to them, for the woman certainly had a flow of words, and, being fairly educated, she let herself out.

Hooper found that he had some cigars and a bottle of brandy that the robbers had neglected to take; but this might have been because the darky had them in his possession at the time, wrapped in the blanket he had strapped behind his saddle.

He brought them out now, and made himself agreeable.

Wild and Jim both refused the brandy, because they never touched anything strong; but they each accepted a cigar.

Charlie took a little nip, as he called it, of the brandy, along with their guest, and then he lighted a cigar and nodded with satisfaction.

There was another person in the camp who wanted very much to sample the contents of that bottle, and that was Hop Wah.

The Chinaman had a failing for strong drink, and sometimes he got more of it than was good for him.

But he knew better than to even hint that he would like to taste it, and he contented himself with watching where the bottle was placed when they were done with it.

Our friends were ready to call it one of the most pleasant evenings they had ever spent in camp, but when it came time to retire Mrs. Hooper declared that she had a horror of lying down to sleep, with nothing but some leaves and a blanket between her and the ground.

"I reckon that'll do yer good," Charlie declared, meaning it. "You'll sleep like a top, after yer once git asleep; see if yer don't!"

"That's right, Minerva," said her husband. "That man knows what he is talking about. Don't you go to worry-

ing about your diamonds. There are more diamonds in the world yet. I am not broke, even if I did get cleaned out of about eight thousand dollars. I was a fool to take so much money with me, but the most of it was paid to me right before I started, so I did not have time to put it away."

She whimpered a little and then retired to the tent that the girls used for sleeping purposes.

As was the custom, our hero divided the watches during the night equally between himself and his two partners.

They usually put in two hours apiece when the nights were short, and a little longer time when they were of greater length.

Just now they were pretty long, so they had to take about two and a half hours each.

While they did not believe they would be bothered by the masked gang that had robbed the Hoopers, they did not know what else might happen, so they considered it necessary to keep a watch.

Experience had taught them that it was the best policy, anyhow.

It fell to the lot of Charlie to take first trick at watching and soon all but he had retired.

The scout went the rounds and saw that the horses were all right, and then he sat down a few yards from the camp, where he could look out and down the trail that they had made in coming to the glen.

He had not been there long when a figure came out of the tent the male members of the party had taken to and crawled toward the spot where the Hoopers' riding outfit was heaped.

The scout happened to look that way, and he saw who it was.

The prowler was no other than Hop, and it did not take Charlie two seconds to imagine what he was after.

The bottle of brandy had been recorked and wrapped in the blanket the darky had taken it from, and Hop was after it.

Charlie sat perfectly still and awaited developments.

Hop cleverly got what he wanted, and then he started around to the rear of the tent, where there was a clump of bushes near a big rock.

The moment he was out of sight the scout was moving quickly for the spot, and without making a particle of noise, either.

He got there just in time to see the Chinaman remove the cork from the bottle.

Then he took another step, and as Hop was in the act of placing the bottle to his lips he reached out and caught him by the end of the queue.

A sharp jerk, and then a frightened yell echoed in the glen.

The yell had hardly died out when a series of screams came from the tent the girls were in.

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed the scout. "I furgot about ther woman from England; she'll have a fit now, sure."

He let go Hop's queue, and the Chinaman, quickly realizing who it was, ran off, still holding fast to the bottle.

Meanwhile Mrs. Hooper had aroused the camp, and she

kept on screaming at the top of her voice until Charlie exclaimed:

"Shet up, will yer? It was nothin' more than a Chineese hollerin' 'cause he got yanked by ther pigtail! Go ter sleep, missus."

But it was fully fifteen minutes before any one thought about going to sleep again, and during that time Hop drank what he wanted from the bottle, and, filling a bottle of his own with the balance, sneaked over to the brook and partly filled it with water.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HUNT BEGINS.

Cheyenne Charlie caught Hop as he was in the act of placing the brandy bottle back under the blanket.

"What are yer tryin' ter do, anyhow, you heathen galoot?" he demanded in a low tone of voice.

"Me only takee velly lillee dlink, Mislser Charlie. See!" And he brought out the bottle and held it up before the light of the dying fire, so the scout could see that there was something in it.

"It's a mighty good thing yer didn't," was the reply. "Jest put ther bottle away; an' if I see yer touch it ag'in I'll let a bullet go at yer, even if it does make Minerva have a fit!"

Hop grinned at this remark.

"Um lady velly muchee flaid when me holler, so be," he observed. "Velly funny lady, allee samee."

"Yes, a mighty funny one, I reckon," Charlie answered.

Hop crawled to his sleeping quarters and the scout started in on his vigil again.

But the night passed quietly enough, save that the occasional yowl of a catamount and the sharp bark of a coyote could be heard.

But these sounds never disturbed our friends, as they were well used to them.

Wild did the last turn at watching, and when the sun was rising he called for all hands to get up.

It was his way of doing business, and it made no difference whether there were guests at the camp, and one of them was an English lady, not accustomed to the ways of the Americans of the Wild West.

In a very few minutes everybody was up and stirring but Mrs. Hooper.

"I guess she did not sleep very well the first part of the night, but when she did get to sleep she set in to make up for lost time," said Arietta. "I believe the report of a rifle would hardly arouse her now."

"Well, let her sleep for a while," answered our hero. "It will do her a lot of good."

Hooper nodded in a pleasant way when this was said.

"My wife has get peculiar ways," he said. "But when you come to know her right you will like her all the better for it. She will get used to the way we live out here before long, and then she will never think about England."

If our hero had expressed his thoughts he would have told him that he doubted that Mrs. Hooper would soon get used to the rough life of the mining camps. But he did not want to hurt the man's feelings any, so he refrained from saying it.

While the cook was getting the breakfast ready, with the assistance of the scout's wife, the rest of our friends proceeded to make the first preparations for the hunt.

They had two double-barrel shotguns with them, which were used by Anna and Eloise when they hunted partridge and quail and other feathered game; and these needed cleaning up a bit, for whether a gun is used or not, it needs looking after occasionally.

Jim Dart undertook the task of putting the two guns in shape, and had just about finished when the breakfast was announced.

"Hello!" he said, noticing that Mrs. Hooper had not yet showed up. "Mr. Hooper, your wife is certainly sleeping well this morning."

"Yes, and I am glad of it," was the reply. "I will make it all right for the extra trouble it causes you folks. I mean to pay you well for your kindness as soon as I get where I can get hold of some money."

"You just consider that you have paid us now," our hero spoke up. "It is a pleasure to us when we can help any one out. Don't think about the cost of what we are giving you to eat. The most we use here we shoot ourselves. Meal, flour, pepper, salt and bacon is about all we buy, save coffee, of course; so you can readily understand that we are under no great expense in that way. If we can't shoot enough game to fill out on the meat part of it we go without. But we seldom have to go without, eh, girls?"

He turned to the girls as he spoke, and they promptly declared that it was very seldom, indeed.

The breakfast was eaten, and Mrs. Hooper slept on.

"Well," said the rich mine owner, shrugging his shoulders, "I suppose I had better get ready to go on to the place we started for. It can't be more than forty miles from here at the most."

"Mr. Hooper," answered Wild, looking at him in an interested way, "your business at the mining camp is not very pressing, is it?"

"Well, no. Any time will do to go there, I suppose. It was more to get my wife acquainted with the country that we set out, anyhow."

"Suppose you stay right here with us until we get your money and your wife's diamonds back?"

"By jove! Do you mean that, Young Wild West?"

"I certainly do."

"And you think there is a chance to catch the robbers?"

"Oh, yes."

"But there were seven of them; I am positive of that. I was not so badly frightened that I forgot to count them."

"It makes no difference if there were fourteen of them, Mr. Hooper. I reckon we will be able to attend to them. Coolness, good judgment, strategy and an ability to fight if it is necessary ought to win out against them. I reckon we have had just as hard tasks ahead of us, and won

out, too. Anyhow, if you stay in camp with us for two or three days it will do your wife a lot of good."

"I will see what she says when she awakens."

"All right. If you don't object we will leave you here in camp with our Chinamen for a couple of hours. We are going out to look for some game."

"All right; I'll stay right here. I want to be here when Mrs. Hooper awakes, anyhow."

Our friends were not long in getting ready to begin what they had chosen to call their tree days' hunt.

Wild knew very well that there must be plenty of game all around them, and that they would not have to go very far from the camp to get it was pretty certain.

When they set out all had rifles but Anna and Eloise, who carried the double-barrel shotguns.

"Bear fur me," said Cheyenne Charlie, as he took to a thicket and began searching for tracks.

"Anything at all that is worth shooting," our hero remarked.

They spread out and started up the mountainside, after it being understood that they were not to get out of hearing distance.

The girls kept close together in the centre of the spread-out group.

They had not gone a quarter of a mile from the camp when a small herd of antelopes was discovered by Arietta.

The girl was quick to fire always, and she dropped the buck that seemed to be the leader in a twinkling.

The echoes of the shot had scarcely died out when both Wild and Jim caught sight of the swiftly running creatures.

They each got a shot, so three of the animals were dropped, and that in less than fifteen minutes from the time they left the camp.

Charlie ran to assist, and it was not long before the antelopes were dressed and hanging up, where they could gather them in later.

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed the scout. "But that's what I calls fine. I was jest gittin' on ther trail of a bear when I heard them shots. Now I'll go an' 'tend ter Mister Bruin, as they calls a bear."

He soon left them, and it was only natural that the rest should follow the course he took, or keep somewhere in the same direction, anyhow.

Whether the bear Charlie had been following had become frightened and changed its course, or whether it was attracted by the sounds, cannot be said; but the first thing Anna, who was to the right of Arietta and Eloise, knew she was confronted by the big game.

It was a full-grown black bear, and as it stood upright in a cleft among the rocks, not more than twenty feet from the scout's wife, she was so startled that an involuntary scream left her lips.

Her shotgun was a rather poor weapon to bag a bear with, anyhow, so it was just as well that she did not open fire on the beast.

The bear growled when she screamed and stood his ground.

It was quite evident now that the animal's den was back in the cleft, and that made him all the more fierce.

Anna did not run, for she knew that would simply invite the ugly creature to pursue her, and that meant that one little misstep would place her in the greatest danger.

But our friends had heard her scream.

However, Arietta was the first to arrive on the scene.

"Keep cool, Anna," the brave girl advised. "I'll soon settle Mr. Bruin."

The bear turned, as though to retreat, when he saw her, and in doing it the left side was exposed.

That was just what Arietta wanted.

Her rifle went to her shoulder, and, taking a quick aim, she pulled the trigger.

Crang!

As the report rang out the bear lunged outward and staggered toward the scout's wife, who sprang nimbly away.

But if she had stood stock still the stricken animal would never have reached her, for it fell in a heap within six feet of the spot.

"So you got him, eh, Et?" queried Young Wild West, as he came running to the spot. "Good! I reckon Charlie isn't the only one who can shoot bears.

Eloise came next, and then came Charlie and Jim.

"That's fine!" exclaimed the scout. "Bear meat, salted an' smoked, makes fine eatin', especially when there ain't no other meat ter be had. Sorter flustered yer, eh, Anna?"

"I was badly frightened, Charlie," was the retort. "But I knew better than to put a charge of birdshot in the brute. That would have only made it all the worse for me."

"Right yer are, gal," and, drawing his hunting knife, Charlie went at work at the bear.

CHAPTER V.

CHARLIE HAS A CLOSE CALL.

Anna soon recovered from the fright she got from the sudden appearance of the bear, and then the hunt was resumed.

"I reckon it is about time you did something, Charlie," said Wild, nodding to the scout. "If you don't look out, Anna and Eloise will get a shot at something and beat you out."

"That's all right," was the reply. "Ther bear Arietta jest shot should have been mine, an' he would have been, too, fur I was right on his tracks. He jest happened ter pop out in front of ther gal an' give her a scare, that's all. But I'm mighty glad Arietta got him, though. Some wimmen folks ain't meant ter hunt bears."

They now started in a circle, intending to strike into the camp after a couple of hours.

It was not long before a flock of partridges started up, and then it was that the two shotguns came in play, though the others used their rifles with great success, too.

In half an hour twenty-two partridges had been picked up, which would have almost satisfied a hunter from the East.

These were strung upon a white birch whip and left

hanging to the limb of a tree, so they could be gathered in later on, with the rest of the game.

As luck would have it, Charlie struck some more bear tracks right after that, and then he started off, determined to bag his game this time.

Anna found out what he was up to, and she turned and followed him, for she liked to see her husband shoot.

Charlie followed the tracks and was soon in a place where caves and rocks were numerous.

The bear had retreated to one of the caves, no doubt, and the scout was trying to find which one it was.

He has just about located it when his wife came up.

"Where is the bear, Charlie?" she asked, in a low tone of voice.

"Right in that cave, I reckon, gal," was the reply. "Did yer foller me ter see me git him?"

"Yes, that's what I came for," she answered.

"All right. Jest watch me git him out, then."

Charlie had seen the tracks, so he was quite certain that there was at least one bear in the cave, which had a very low opening to it, and could not be entered, unless one got down upon his hands and knees.

He picked up a couple of stones about the size of his fist and then he went up close to the mouth of the cave and let one of them go inside.

Growls were heard at once.

"There's more'n one there, gal," the scout whispered. "A whole family of 'em, most likely."

Then he let the other stone go inside the cave.

The result was very satisfactory to him, for out came a big bear.

But that was not all!

Another was following close behind, and after her came three half-grown cubs.

"A whole family of 'em, as I said!" Charlie exclaimed. "Look out, gal! Don't let 'em git too close to yer. They'll fight like thunder, yer know. They've got their young with 'em!"

Anna beat a hasty retreat.

Then Charlie proceeded to business.

Crang!

His rifle spoke sharply and the head of the bear fam-ily dropped and rolled over in the throes of death.

With a maddened roar, the female reared up and came at him, ready to tear him to pieces.

The attack was so sudden that Charlie stepped back involuntarily and his foot caught upon the root of a tree.

He tried to keep his balance, but could not, and down he went.

Anna uttered a scream as the maddened bear sham-bled toward him.

Bang!

She felt that she must do something, so she took a quick aim and sent a charge of shot in the side of the beast.

Bruin turned slightly, but before the scout could re-gain his feet and get hold of his rifle, which had fallen from his grasp, she fell upon him.

Bang!

Anna fired again, and uttered a scream at the same time.

The charge of shot struck the bear in the hind quarter this time, and made her more furious than ever.

But Cheyenne Charlie was not going to let the bear claw or hug him to death.

If he could not get hold of his rifle he could his hunting knife.

He had the weapon in his hand as the paw of the she-bear struck him a glancing blow on the shoulder.

His powerful arm drove the blade forward into the breast of the bear.

The huge creature shuddered and then arose to an upright position.

As quick as a flash the scout rolled out of the way, the knife clutched in his hand.

Once on his feet, he sprang forward to meet the foe, for he was not afraid to tackle a grizzly at close quarters, much less a common black bear.

By this time Wild and the rest were hastening to the scene.

They had heard the shots, as well as the screams of Anna, and they knew that something must be decidedly wrong.

The scout gave the finishing touches to the bear just as Wild and Arietta reached the spot.

"Great gimlets!" he cried, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow. "That was putty lively while it lasted. I had my hands full fur a minute, I reckon."

But he had not been hurt much, for the claws of the angered bear had hardly pierced his clothing.

The cubs had beat a hasty retreat to the cave, and were not to be seen when the rest arrived.

"What was the trouble, Charlie?" Wild asked, as he looked at the two dead bears.

"Ther she one sorter give me a little surprise, that's all," was the reply. "I had ter catch my foot ag'in a root an' go down, an' then she lit on me in a jiffy. But I reckon it's all right."

Anna related just what had occurred, and then they all declared that Charlie had met with a rather close call.

"Well," observed our hero, "I reckon if it keeps on this way we won't have to keep up the hunt for three days. We'll get all the game we want in one."

"We certainly have done mighty good so far, that's right," Charlie answered. "I s'pose we may as well git them cubs out of ther cave, while we're at it. Might as well clean up ther whole family. They're putty fat, by ther looks of 'em, an' they'll make mighty fine eatin'."

"All right, then; we'll get them out."

Charlie knew that he could not get the half-grown bears out by throwing stones into the cave.

But he knew of a way that would make them come out, however.

He quickly gathered up a big handful of leaves and then rolled them into a ball.

Striking a match, he lighted the leaves, and then, reaching in as far as the length of his arm would permit him, he hurled the flaming bunch back into the cave.

In less than two seconds smoke came pouring from the cave.

There was no draught there to make the leaves burn readily, so they made a lot of smoke.

Squeals and growls were heard almost instantly, and the next minute the cubs came tumbling out.

Jim and Arietta quickly despatched them by three well-directed shots, and that wound up the "whole family," as the scout put it.

The slain beasts were skinned and dressed, and then they all continued to make the circle before returning to the camp, which could not have been a bit more than a quarter of a mile distant.

But though they had met with so much success at the start the couple of hours they put in that morning resulted in but a little more game being bagged.

When they got back to the camp they had with them half a dozen quail that had been the last they had seen to shoot, and the rest of the game was hanging along the circular route they had taken.

They found Mrs. Hooper up and in a pretty fair frame of mind.

"The shooting roused her," said her husband, smiling. "She thought the camp had been attacked at first, but I soon persuaded her that everything was all right."

"That is right," the Englishwoman spoke up. "But this is dreadful, isn't it? I don't know how we will ever stay here two or three days. It is the hope that my diamonds will be returned to me that keeps me here, and that alone."

"Well, I reckon if you had gone through what my wife did an hour or so ago you'd feel like goin' back ter England, all right," retorted the scout, grinning at her. "She come mighty near bein' gobbled up by a bear."

"Mercy!" gasped the woman, holding up her hands.

Then Anna related all about her rather thrilling adventure, and also told how Charlie had met with such a narrow escape.

Mrs. Hooper was really frightened, but when she saw the bright eyes and smiling faces of the girls she concluded that it could not have been so very bad, after all.

"Hop," said Wild, "just get the pack horses ready, and we'll go and get the game."

"Allee light, Mislér Wild," replied the Chinaman, as he hastened to obey.

They were not long in getting away, and when they got to the place where they had left the three antelopes hanging they were surprised to find them no longer there.

"Grub thieves is around, I reckon," remarked Cheyenne Charlie, shrugging his shoulders.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RAIDERS REAP THE FRUITS OF THE MORNING'S HUNT.

Bolivar Pete, the "Cute One," as he was called by his villainous companions, was the first of the gang to arise the morning after the hold-up in Red Ravine.

The sun was not yet up, but as early as it was, Mag, his wife, had preceded him.

"Do you know one thing, Pete?" she said, patronizingly, as she proceeded with the work of getting the breakfast ready for the raiders. "You've been tellin' me

about ther fine clothes that Englishwoman had on till you've got me ter thinkin' that I ought ter own 'em. Why don't you an' ther rest of ther boys, or some of 'em, strike out as soon as yer git your grub, an' overtake them people? Yer kin take some of my old clothes along an' make ther woman trade with yer. You do this, an' you'll find out that you'll be solid with me as long as yer live."

"Well, I reckon it would be a good idea," the villainous husband answered, nodding his head. "Big Barton was talking about how we ought ter go out an' try ter knock over a bear, or deer, so we could lay in a little meat. It are most likely that we kin kill two birds with one stone. It ain't likely that all ther boys will care about goin', 'cause ther most of 'em is a putty lazy lot, an' some of 'em will be fur puttin' over ter Scrabble Flat ter git filled up on tanglefoot. They all likes their rum, yer know, an' there ain't a drop in ther house jest now."

"Well, I reckon three of yer would be enough ter do ther job, anyhow," the woman answered, showing her teeth in what was meant to be a pleasant smile. "I don't know but what they ought ter be willin' ter do somethin' ter please me, anyhow. I sartinly do work putty hard ter keep this shanty in shape; an' I never complain about cookin' meals fur seven men. If any of 'em wants ter go ter Scrabble Flat it will come in handy fur me ter git some cornmeal an' a few other things what we need ter run ther shanty with. You jest wake up Big Barton, an' we'll have a talk with him about it. I sartinly want ther hat an' ridin' suit that woman has got. Not that I'll ever make an awful lot of use of 'em, but I jest want 'em, that's all."

"Mag," said her husband, shrugging his shoulders, "s'pose you wake ther cap'n? He's mighty cross mornin's, sometimes, an' he won't give you no slack, 'cause he knows who he's got ter 'pend on fur ter have his grub cooked."

"Oh, all right. If you're afraid of ther big galoot, I ain't. I never yet seen ther galoot I was afraid ter wake up, big or little. I reckon when I wake him ther rest will wake, too."

Then, without any delay, she left the old cast-iron wood stove she was kindling a fire in and opened the door to the adjoining room, which was the sleeping quarters for her boarders, as she sometimes called them.

"Hey, there! Git up, you sleepy galoots!" she bawled out in a voice that sounded more like that of a drunken cowpuncher than that of a woman. "There's somethin' on ther carpet this mornin'. Yer all turned in early enough last night, so there ain't no excuse. 'Git up, I say!'"

"What in thunder is ther matter?" roared the leader of the raiders from within. "What are yer tryin' ter do, Mag, wake up ther dead?"

"Come on out an' find out, Big Barton," was the retort. "I'm goin' ter have a mighty fine breakfast of ham an' eggs an' coffee fur yer in a few minutes."

The villain said no more.

Evidently the mention of breakfast partly mollified him, and a few minutes later he came out, rubbing his eyes.

The others followed him, and when they saw that the

sun was not yet up they shook their heads and put on rather ugly looks.

"I didn't know there was anything on ther carpet so early in ther mornin', Cap," one of them observed, testily. "I was jest takin' a nice snooze when Mag yelled out loud enough ter be heard a mile. What's up, anyhow?"

"Bart," said the woman, paying no attention to what the man said, "I want you an' Pete, an' one of ther rest ter take ther trail of ther man an' woman yer held up last night. I want ther fine clothes an' hat ther woman had on. Then, if any of ther rest of ther galoots is thinkin' about goin' over ter Scrabble Flat, there's a few things I want from ther store. That's what's on ther carpet!"

She did not stop to note the effects of her words, but turned to the stove and got the breakfast moving along rapidly.

Big Barton looked at the Cute One, who only grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he said, "I reckon as how Mag has got ter be 'commodated, Pete; what do yer think about it?"

"Oh, I told her I was willin'," was the quick reply. "She will have it that way, yer know."

"All right. Me an' you an' Wince will strike out on ther trail as soon as we git breakfast. We'll take along an extra horse, 'cause we need somethin' in ther line of meat. If we wasn't so blamed fur from a ranch we might git a yearlin'. But one thing about it, there's plenty of game around here, so I reckon we kin shoot what we want an' foller ther rich mine owner an' his wife an' ther nigger, all right. We kin git 'em first, an' then git ther game afterward."

"That's right."

Mag was listening, but she did not act much as though she was.

The odor of frying ham soon filled the cabin, and the men, who had been in a bad humor at first, began to sniff the air and feel better.

It was not long before the long table was set with tin plates and cups and then the raiders were called to breakfast.

Long before the meal had been finished everybody was in a pleasant frame of mind.

The result was that the woman carried the day, and what she wanted done was arranged for.

As soon as breakfast was over Big Barton, Bolivar Pete and Wince got ready to take the trail of the mine owner, while the other four of the raiders proceeded to arrange to ride over to the mining camp called Scrabble Flat.

The first three left in advance of the others, however, riding pretty fast and leading a horse to carry back their game behind them.

When they got to the spot where the holdup had occurred they had no difficulty in taking the trail of Hooper, and they lost no time in striking out.

"I reckon that woman from England must have put in a putty hard night of it," said Big Barton, with a grin on his ugly visage. "It ain't likely that they knowed jest where they was. Anyhow, they sot out ther wrong way ter git ter Scrabble Flat."

"Oh, they've stopped as soon as it got too dark ter see which way they was goin'," answered Bolivar Pete. "I

wouldn't be surprised if we found 'em afore many minutes has passed."

"That's right."

Then all three laughed harshly as they thought of the actions of Hooper's wife when she was relieved of her diamonds.

They pushed along steadily, and at length the Cute One declared that he smelled smoke.

"There's a campfire not very fur away," he added. "I wouldn't wonder if it's them we're lookin' fur."

"I wouldn't wonder a bit if it was," the captain answered.

"More'n likely," Wince spoke up.

"We'll go on a little further, an' then if ther smoke shows up any stronger we'll git off our horses an' investigate."

The smoke did become more in evidence as they rode along, for it happened that they were approaching the camp of Young Wild West, and, as the wind happened to be that way, they got the full benefit of the smoke from the campfire.

The three villains were within a couple of hundred yards of the camp when they halted and dismounted, and then, leaving Wince with the horses, Big Barton and Bolivar Pete set out on foot to make the "investigation."

It was just then that a rifle cracked not far away.

It was followed by two more shots, and then the villains paused and looked at each other.

As the reader knows, our friends were out hunting at that time, and the raiders had simply heard them shooting.

They had not yet seen the camp in the glen, so they decided to move in the direction the shots came from and find out what was going on.

But they decided to return to their waiting companion first and let him know what they were going to do.

Then they followed up the direction the shooting came from, and a few minutes later they came upon three antelope carcasses hanging to the limb of a tree.

"I reckon them will do fur us," said Big Barton, in a whisper. "We'll be saved ther trouble of shootin' anything now. Wince, jest git them things slung on ther extra horse. I know when we strike a good thing, all right."

They were not long in taking possession of the game, and then they followed our friends up as they made the circle, they taking what game they wanted as fast as they came to it.

It had dawned upon them right away that there must be a party of hunters out, and when they heard the cry of a female they concluded that the Englishwoman must have uttered it.

"I reckon there's too many of 'em fur us ter tackle," said Big Barton. "They must have been lucky enough ter fall in with some hunters last night, an' by ther looks of what they've been shootin', I reckon we don't want ter let 'em draw a bead on us. Boys, we'd better lay low on this game, I reckon. We'll git this stuff to a safe place, an' then we'll come back an' have a look at their camp."

They really had the horse loaded with game now, as

they had reached the spot less than half an hour after our friends started on the hunt.

They took their time about getting back to locate and spy on the camp, and it so happened that they came in sight of it just as Young Wild West and his partners and the girls got back.

Then the three villains became very cautious, indeed, when they heard our hero call the Chinaman to go with them and get the game they had shot.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RAIDERS MAKE A MISS OF IT.

Big Barton and his two companions did not leave the vicinity right away.

When they saw Young Wild West and his two partners start off with Hop to gather in the game, the sight of Hooper and the four females left at the camp caused them to do some quick thinking.

"I know what we'll do," whispered the Cute One, brightening up. "We'll jest tackle them what's left there while ther others is lookin' fur ther game we stole. I reckon we kin make 'em keep mighty still if we sneak up an' git 'em covered afore they see us. Come on! We ain't got no time ter lose, yer know."

"That's right. But it'll take them galoots easy ten minutes ter git back here, even if they come right away as soon as they find that ther antelopes an' things ain't there," answered Big Barton.

Then they sneaked through the undergrowth and were soon at the edge of the glen. They paused and put on masks.

Certainly the girls were not suspecting that anything in the line of danger lurked so close by.

They were laughing and talking with Mrs. Hooper in an effort to get her interested, while Hooper stood looking on, a smile on his face. Wing Wah was dozing under a tree, as was his custom when there was nothing for him to do.

The air was cool and bracing, and the cheeks of the girls were red, making them look all the prettier.

The eyes of the three creeping scoundrels looked upon them gloatingly, for they were not used to seeing such pretty girls.

Big Barton paused when they were within fifty feet of the camp.

"Wince," whispered he, "you go back an' have ther horses ready. We'll have ter leave in a hurry, most likely."

"All right," was the reply, and he started to do as he was told.

Then the captain and the Cute One moved on cautiously.

Just as they arose to carry out their villainous scheme the mine owner turned his gaze that way.

He saw them, and in spite of their masked faces he must have recognized them as two of the robbers who had held him up the night before.

"Look out!" he cried. "Thieves! Hello, Young Wild West! Come—quick!"

"Shet up, you crazy galoot!" commanded Big Barton, pointing his revolver at him. "Another word an' you'll die! Don't none of yer dare ter open your mouths!"

Bolivar Pete lost no time in showing his gun, too, and the two looked formidable enough.

The injunction was entirely lost upon Mrs. Hooper, however, for she uttered a shriek that could be heard half a mile and then fell in a faint.

It was then that Arietta showed her tact and coolness.

She made out that she was stooping to lift the fainting woman, but instead of doing so she quickly drew a revolver and fired.

The bullet hit the Cute One on the wrist and he dropped his weapon and let out a cry of pain.

Before Big Barton could turn upon her the brave girl had him covered.

"Drop that, you sneaking thief!" she cried. "I've got you!"

This was something that the villain had not counted on, and before he could fully realize that he had all the worst of the bargain Anna and Eloise had drawn their revolvers and stood pointing them at the two villains.

Bolivar Pete had not been injured much by the shot Arietta had fired.

She had intended the bullet for a spot where it would do the most good, but she had to fire so quickly that it grazed the back of the villain's right hand, causing a flesh wound that was now bleeding copiously.

The Cute One thought she had shot him there intentionally, and that it was done for the purpose of disarming him.

That made him all the more afraid of the girl.

Big Barton was not long in letting his six-shooter drop, and then both raiders were utterly helpless before the three girls.

But they found that Hooper was anything but a coward, too, for he picked up a lariat and stepped forward to make them prisoners.

In doing so he got between the villains and the girls, and, accepting the chance, as slim as it was, Big Barton uttered a sharp cry and ran for the bushes and rocks that were but a few feet distant.

But the Cute One had been thinking of doing the same thing, and he was right after him.

"Here! Come back here, you rascals!" cried the mine owner, as he made a futile attempt to catch one of them with the lariat.

But they got away easily, for once they were under the cover of the rocks and trees they were out of danger, for the time, anyhow.

They reached their horses and, mounting them, followed Wince for the trail.

The latter had heard what had taken place at the camp, and he was thoroughly frightened now.

He had the horse that carried the stolen game on a dead run, and it seemed as though some of the load would be lost before they got very far.

But Wince had paid particular attention to tying the three carcasses and other game on the horse, so unless the animal stumbled and fell they were liable to keep it in their possession.

On they went, and, reaching the trail they had followed when they left the ravine, they put the horses at their best and rapidly covered the ground.

Big Barton breathed a sigh of relief when they came to the ravine.

"Now let 'em come!" he exclaimed. "I reckon we know Red Ravine from one end to ther other, an' ther minute we hear ther galoots comin' we kin dive in among ther rocks on one side or the other an' give 'em a dose of lead when they ain't lookin' fur it. We'll soon settle them fellers, all right!"

But they did not hear the sounds of pursuit, and a few minutes later they reached the narrow pass that led into the little valley that had only one means of ingress and egress.

The three rode through in single file, their horses at a walk, and once in the valley Wince let out a shout of joy.

"Hold on!" cautioned Bolivar Pete. "Don't go ter makin' any noise. Yer don't know how close ter us some one might be. Keep quiet, Wince."

"That's right," spoke up the leader. "We don't want no one ter find this place, not by a good deal. This is what we call our haven, an' we want ter keep it a secret. There ain't one out of a thousand as would think there was a pass leadin' in here, 'cause it turns so sharp right at ther start that it looks like a little split in ther rocks, that's all. Yer know what you said about it, Pete—when yer found it, I mean."

"Yes, it was only by accident that I found it," was the Cute One's reply. "It was in ther night time, an' me an' Mag was ridin' along through ther ravine, with no particular place in view. A thunderstorm come up, an' we took ter what we thought was a niche at ther side. Then we found that it was a little pass, an' we kept right on goin' until we found ther little valley here. Ther shanty was here, but it wasn't as big as it is now. Who built it we never could find out; but it was deserted, so we took possession of it. It ain't likely that any one will ever come back ter claim it. Ther chances is that them what built it is dead long afore this."

"They'll be dead mighty quick if they do come back!" declared Big Barton. "That's our shanty now, an' there ain't no rubbin' that out."

"I heard Mag say ther other day that it was hers," Wince remarked, as he rode up to the door. "There she is now. Jest ask her about it."

His companions shrugged their shoulders, for they knew better than to ask the woman any such question.

"Well, how did yer make out?" she asked, coming out and looking at them expectantly. "Got plenty of game, I see. Yer must be improvin' in your shootin', I reckon."

"We didn't have ter fire a shot ter git that game, Mag," her husband answered, quickly.

"Yer didn't?"

Mag arched her brows and looked surprised.

"No; we had some one else ter shoot it fur us. All we had ter do was ter come along an' git it," spoke up the leader of the raiders.

"Well, where's them fine clothes, an' that fancy hat yer went after?"

"Couldn't git 'em, Mag. We come mighty nigh git-tin' our medicine while we was tryin' it. Jest look at that!"

Bolivar Pete held up his hand, showing the dirty rag he had bound about the wounded wrist.

Mag frowned.

She did not care anything about the wound.

"How come it that yer couldn't git them things?" she demanded, hotly.

"Well, ther woman what had 'em on is with a big party of hunters, an' we couldn't do nothin'. If all hands of us had went we couldn't have done no more. All we could do was ter steal some of ther game what ther hunters shot."

Then he made up a story that sounded logical enough, and Mag was forced to swallow her chagrin at having failed to get the coveted wearing apparel.

But her disposition was not very good after that, and finally the three men decided that they would follow the example of the rest of the raiders and go over to the mining camp and "liquor up."

"You've got them fine diamonds, Mag, so don't you care," said her husband, consolingly. "Some of these times I'll git yer dresses, an' a hat, too, that will knock out anything that Englishwoman had on. You jest take it easy now."

"Fetch back somethin' good from Scrabble Flat," was all she said, and she acted as though she meant it, too.

Then the three men hung up the game and mounted their horses.

They had scarcely got out in the ravine when they heard the clatter of hoofs.

"There were three of them," spoke up Hooper; "and I am pretty certain that they are the same ones who robbed us just before sunset last night. The other four did not show up, though."

"We'll find out who and what they are before many hours, I reckon. Boys, get your horses ready. We will take the trail right away."

Wild addressed Jim and Charlie as he spoke, and they hastened to put the saddles on their horses.

He soon had his own steed ready, and, turning to Arietta, he called out:

"Look out for the camp, Et. We will have to leave you in charge."

"All right," was the reply. "They didn't hardly catch us napping that time; but if they come again they will get more than they want!"

Mrs. Hooper was just coming to when our three friends rode away.

As the bushes and rocks were so plentiful around that section, it took them a few minutes to discover the trail the villains made when they rode away.

But once on it they got over the ground quickly.

However, they were a little too late to overtake the raiders before they reached their hidden headquarters, as Big Barton and his pards had too much of a start.

But they kept right on the trail, and when they found that it branched off on the regular wagon trail that led to Silver City our friends realized that they had to be pretty careful or the scoundrels would elude them.

As it was, they rode on through the ravine, without thinking of looking for the entrance to anything like a hidden valley.

But when they got to the other end of Red Ravine Wild called a halt.

They had been following fresh hoofprints all the way through the ravine, though in some places the ground was so hard and stony that they could not be seen.

It was from this condition of the trail that they were deceived, for the fresh hoofprints, after they passed the entrance to the little valley, had been made by the four raiders who set out for the mining camp of Scrabble Flat.

Young Wild West and his partners were not much acquainted with the country right around there, though they knew that it was Red Ravine they had just come through, and that the trail led from Silver City to Alkali Flat.

Scrabble Flat was a place they had never heard of, and when Hooper had remarked that there was a mining camp somewhere close by they thought that he must have made a mistake in the distance.

"Well, boys," said our hero, as he looked around, "I don't know as there is any use in going further just now. The galoots have gone on, sure enough. But something tells me that they were spying on us, for it was not long after we left the camp to go and pick up the game that they tried their game on Hooper and the girls. We will ride back slowly, and when we find a good place we will stop there for half an hour. This is just the kind of a place for road agents to hang out, for there must be considerable travel through here, by the looks of the trail."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MEETING IN RED RAVINE.

Young Wild West and his partners had scarcely made the discovery that the antelopes they had shot were gone when the scream uttered by Mrs. Hooper rang out.

Though they were fully a quarter of a mile from the camp, it sounded with piercing distinctness, and they all knew that something was decidedly wrong.

"Never mind looking for the game now, boys," said the dashing young deadshot. "Come on! There is trouble in the camp."

"Ther galoots what took them antelopes is makin' it, too, yer kin bet!" added Cheyenne Charlie.

They all turned and ran back for the camp, Hop following with the pack horses.

If our friends had been mounted they might have got to the camp in time to prevent the escape of the three villains, but, as it was, they arrived just about two minutes after Big Barton and the Cute One got out of sight behind the thick bushes.

Arietta, who was perfectly cool, related quickly what had happened.

"Ah!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "So the galoots are after us, eh? Well, I reckon they'll wish they had left us alone, before we got through with them."

"I reckon so," Charlie answered, as he turned and looked the way they had been heading. "I wouldn't be surprised if we was ter meet a stage coach or somethin' afore we git through."

But there was nothing to be seen in the way of things that were human in that way, so he followed the dashing young deadshot, as he rode on slowly into the ravine.

At one time a stream of water had flowed through the ravine, but this had long since dried up, and nothing but the shape of the watercourse showed in some places.

The trail really ran over what had once been the bed of a stream, though it had now worn down quite smooth.

Owing to this fact there were some places in it, as has been stated, that were so hard as to refuse to show the prints of hoofs.

Right where the opening in the side of the cliff was this was the case, and hence our three friends had failed to track the raiders to their den.

"Well, what do you think of it, Wild?" Jim Dart asked as they rode back. "You are of the opinion, then, that the three men will be back this way soon?"

"Well, I think they will, unless they have got some kind of a headquarters down that way. But, suppose they did not go that far, after all?"

"Why, the tracks showed that they did, Wild."

"That is true enough. But there might have been others going that way. I have taken good notice of the tracks along here. One of the horses was pretty lame, I should say. I did not notice anything like that when we first took the trail."

"That's right, Wild!" spoke up the scout. "Jest fur ther fun of it we'll find where that horse first begun ter go lame. He might have fell, an' that made it, an' if that's right we'll be able ter find ther exact spot, unless it happens that ther ground there is too hard ter show any tracks."

They kept their eyes on the ground as they rode along, and the hoofprint made by the lame horse was noticeable right along.

The further they went the more evident it became, which showed that the animal had improved as it went on through the ravine.

This was to be expected from a horse that had been standing long enough to become stiffened, but not from one that had been on the trail for nearly an hour.

The three put their horses on a canter and rode on.

In a few minutes they rounded a turn in the ravine and came in sight of three horsemen.

As might be supposed, they were no others than Big Barton and his two partners.

The villains had just emerged from the narrow pass, and, having heard the hoofbeats, were looking directly at our friends when they came in sight.

There was nothing about the looks of the men that would indicate that they were anything but cowboys, so Wild could not convince himself that they were the three villains they had been pursuing.

But he resolved to find out who and what they were, and that right away.

"Hello, strangers!" he called out, as he reined in his horse. "Did you just come through the ravine?"

"Yes," replied Barton, putting on an air of indifference. "What do yer want ter know fur?"

"Well, we are looking for some galoots who have been doing a little in the line of holding up folks, and we thought maybe you had come across them."

"We come from a ranch about thirty miles back," lied the leader of the raiders. "We don't know nothin' about anybody holdin' up folks. We've heard that there was a gang that hung out somewhere around these parts, though. They calls themselves ther Raiders of Red Ravine, so they say over in Scrabble Flat."

"Scrabble Flat, eh? How far is that from here?" Wild asked.

"Jest about eighteen miles from here, as near as I kin say. We're bound over there now."

While the conversation was going on Wild and his partners were studying the faces of the villains carefully.

It did not take our hero a minute to come to the conclusion that they were not exactly what they were posing for.

But he continued questioning Big Barton, and when he asked him what sort of a place Scrabble Flat was the villain replied:

"Oh, jest a little minin' camp, that's all. But there's plenty of tanglefoot ter be had there, an' that's what we want jest now, ain't it, boys?"

Wild allowed his horse to walk up pretty close to the trio, and his sharp eye caught sight of something black sticking out of the opening in the flannel shirt of one of them.

It happened to be the Cute One, and the black object was nothing more or less than the mask he had worn when the attack was made on the camp that morning.

Wild guessed what it was, and before the man knew what he was up to he had seized it and pulled it forth.

"What are yer doin'?" roared Big Barton, as he saw the mask in the hand of the young deadshot. "I'll fill yer full of lead fur that, you young galoot!"

He grabbed for his revolver, but Young Wild West was altogether too quick for him, and got him covered.

"Just take your hand off that gun, or I'll let a streak of daylight through you, you sneaking galoot!" he cried, in a ringing voice.

CHAPTER IX.

A LITTLE FUN AT THE CAMP.

Young Wild West and his partners had not been gone long from the camp when Mrs. Hooper asked her husband for a little of the brandy they had brought with them.

"I never had such a fright in my life," she declared. "Oh, will we ever get out of this awful part of the country?"

"Don't, Minerva!" pleaded Hooper. "You will learn to love the beautiful wilderness of New Mexico after you have got acquainted with the ways of the inhabitants. It is only because that we have struck a bad streak of luck that all this is happening. Just see how the young ladies enjoy this sort of living! Why, they don't seem to be a

bit alarmed over what happened a little while ago. If it had not been for the coolness of Miss Arietta things would have been a great deal worse. I wish you could be more like her, my dear."

"Well, I wasn't brought up where they carry big pistols and knives, and don't hesitate to use them," answered the woman. "But hurry up with the brandy, Harris."

But the ducky had heard her request, and he came with the bottle at that moment.

Hooper took it from him, and when he noticed that there was but a small portion of the contents gone he gave a nod of satisfaction.

The truth was that he felt that his nerves had been jarred about sufficient to make him require a little of the brandy, as well as his better half.

He poured a small quantity of the brandy—or what was supposed to be brandy—into the glass the dark servant had furnished him with, and then handed it to his wife, who was really very pale, and looked as though she needed something in the line of a stimulant.

Mrs. Hooper placed the glass to her lips and swallowed the contents quickly enough.

Then a puzzled look came over her face, and, looking at Harris, she exclaimed:

"That is not brandy, Harris. What do you mean?"

"It ain't brandy?" echoed the mine owner, dropping back to his old-time way of talking. "Thunderation! What do you mean, gal?"

"Just what I said, Harris," she replied, severely. "That stuff is nothing more than water."

"Wait till I see."

If any one had been looking at him just then it would have been noticed that a faint smile was resting on the face of Hop Wah.

Hop was a very clever sort of a Chinaman.

He was not only a sleight-of-hand performer and a card sharp, but a sort of joker, as well.

But, as has been stated, his worst fault was that he liked tanglefoot too well.

What he had not drank of the bottle the night before he now had in a flask that was hidden in one of his capacious pockets.

He watched the mine owner as he poured out some of the contents of the brandy bottle and took a good look at it.

"It certainly does not look like brandy, Minerva," he declared. "But I don't understand it, I assure you."

Then he took a taste of it and shook his head.

"That is nothing more than water," he went on to say. "It must be that some one has taken the brandy from the bottle and put water in the place of it."

"Maybe um bad lobbbers allee samee do it," suggested Hop, who could not help saying something just then.

"Or a bad Chinaman," added Arietta, quickly. "Hop, you must have a little brandy. Give the lady some. She is ill, and if she is in the habit of using it, perhaps it will do her good."

"I never use brandy only in cases of necessity," spoke up Mrs. Hooper. "Just now I feel greatly in need of a little."

"Allee light," answered Hop. "Me givree you some,

so be. But um may no be allee samee goodee, likee what you havee."

"Let me see," said Hooper, taking the flask from him, as Hop drew it from his pocket. "I'll soon tell you if it is any good."

He uncorked the flask and smelled the contents.

"Pretty fair," he remarked. "But not quite up to the stuff we had. Try a little, Minerva."

He tendered her some in the glass and she drank it, breathing a sigh of relief as she finished.

"That will do very well; but, as you say, Harris, it is nothing like the kind we are in the habit of using."

Hop grinned, for he knew that both were simply condemning their own brandy.

He had not diluted it one bit, so there could not possibly be any difference.

This time Arietta noticed the grin.

She understood right away that the clever Chinaman had stolen the brandy, and that he had simply treated the couple to some of the same goods.

"Mr. Hooper," she said, "I think you had better keep that flask."

"Why?" came the reply.

"Well, I think it contains some of the brandy that was stolen from your bottle. Hop is a sort of thief, sometimes, you know."

The mine owner "tumbled," if we may use the expression.

"You clever rascal, you!" he exclaimed, looking at Hop. "When did you do that?"

"Me no undelstand," protested the Celestial, innocently.

"Hop," said Arietta, sternly, "you had better own up. You know what you would be apt to get if Wild was here."

"Me no takee, Missy Alietta," declared Hop, shaking his head. "But me see um man with um mask on allee samee sneakee 'lound lilliee while before you allee samee comee backee from um hunt, so be. Me forgittee allee 'boutee, and me no tellee Mislerr Wild."

"That story won't go. You took the brandy, and you may as well own up."

"Maybe me takee when me sleep last nightee," he admitted. "Me pay Mislerr Hooper, anyhow, so be."

He took a ten-dollar bill from a leather pocketbook and tendered it to the mine owner.

"Never mind," said Hooper, a smile breaking over his countenance. "We will let it go at that. Keep your money, and I'll keep this flask."

"Allee light; me allee samee velly muchee satisfied, so be."

"Well, that beats all!" declared Hooper, as he thought it over. "There is Daniel Decker over there, our servant. Why, as fond of liquor as he is, he would not think of stealing it and then substituting water for it."

"Dat right, Boss Hooper," spoke up the ducky. "Me no tief."

"Um niggee man allee samee velly muchee honest, so be," remarked Hop, as though he was speaking to the girls.

"Heah!" cried Daniel Decker, as his boss had called

him. "I don't 'low no Chinees to call me nigger. You jest take dat back, or I'se done furgit dat Missus Hooper am here, an' will give yo' a wallop!"

"Niggee no likee be callee allee samee niggee," Hop said, as though he was explaining what was said to Mrs. Hooper. "Allee light; me no callee niggee, len."

But Daniel Decker did not like this sort of an apology. His ire arose to such an extent that he made a rush at Hop and caught him by the queue.

Then the two grappled and went rolling over on the ground, while Mrs. Hooper shrieked in alarm.

Hop was getting much the worst of it when the mine owner forced the colored man to let up on him.

"Me allee samee gittee square so be," said Hop, trying to smile. "Me givee goodee for badee. You havee smoke, Misher Colored Man? You whippee me, and me havee no hardee feelings, so be."

This was so unexpected that the darky knew not what to say.

But Hooper and his wife took it just as they heard it, and they both advised Daniel to make up with the Chinaman.

This he did, accepting the cigar and declaring that he was sorry for walloping him.

"That's what I call a friendly spirit," declared the Englishwoman. "Now, Daniel, you smoke that cigar and forget the incident. I am sorry the Chinaman so lowered himself as to steal the brandy; but I feel sure that this will be a lesson to him, and that he will never do it again."

"Me nevee do some more, so be," Hop assured her. Then he went to the brook and washed his face, which had become bruised somewhat in the brief struggle with the darky.

Daniel produced a match and lighted the cigar, which was a big, black one, such as are made by Mexicans.

He puffed away heartily, and the girls, suspecting that Hop had played a trick on him, watched to see the result.

Hop came back, smiling placidly, but he took care not to stand too close to the darky.

Daniel succeeded in burning just about half an inch of the cigar, and then there was a loud report, and he fell over backward.

The cigar had exploded, that was all, and, though it was an old trick to the girls, the shock it gave Mrs. Hooper was far more than the victim himself received.

Hooper sprang to catch his wife, who seemed about to faint, and quickly exclaimed:

"It is all right, Minerva. The cigar was loaded, that's all. Hop certainly got square with Daniel. Ha, ha, ha!"

Mrs. Hooper recovered very quickly when she heard this.

Meanwhile the darky hastily scrambled to his feet and sneaked off, for he saw that the girls were laughing heartily at the practical joke.

CHAPTER X.

WILD AND HIS PARTNERS ARE BAFFLED.

The three members of the band of raiders found themselves in a rather bad predicament all at once.

Young Wild West and his partners had the drop on them, and there was no getting out of it.

"So you belong to the gang who robbed the mine owner and his wife last night, do you?" said Wild, as the three put up their hands.

"No!" answered Big Barton, shaking his head. "You've made a bad mistake, if yer think we're robbers. That's jest what I think you are, though, if yer want ter know!"

"I don't want to know what you think," our hero said, with a smile. "But how came it that the galoot on your left had this mask?"

"I found that a little ways back on ther trail," the Cute One answered in a ready fashion. "I reckon you must have recognized it, or yer wouldn't have grabbed it so quick."

"You do, eh? Well, never mind about that. So you found the mask back on the trail, eh?"

"Yes. That's jest as sure as you're sittin' on that sorrel horse!"

"Where was it lying—on which side of the trail, I mean?"

"On ther left, as we come along."

"And you saw it and stopped to pick it up?"

"Yes. I wouldn't have had it if I hadn't done that, would I?"

"Perhaps not. But this was the only one you saw there, was it?"

"Sartin. If there had been any more I would have picked 'em up, same as I did that one."

Bolivar Pete was doing some pretty good lying just then, and he thought he was going to convince the young deadshot that a mistake had been made in taking them for robbers.

But that was where he was making a mistake, for Young Wild West was simply leading him to convict himself.

"Three of you were riding down from the ranch you belong to, and you happened to see this mask lying at the side of the trail, and stopped long enough to pick it up?" Wild went on, keeping the leader of the raiders covered with a hand that was as steady as a rock.

"That's it, exactly," the Cute One declared.

"All right. I may have made a mistake in accusing you fellows of having robbed some people last night here in this ravine, but I hardly think I am. Jim, just search the other two galoots, and see if you can't find masks to match this one. Charlie, you know what to do if they start to object to the search."

As these words sounded in the ears the Cute One's spirits went away down to his boots.

He turned pale and glanced at his companions, who were the same way.

But there was no use in making objections.

Charlie had a revolver in either hand, and the expression on his face told plainly that he would not hesitate to shoot if he thought the occasion demanded it.

Jim went at it in a matter-of-fact way, and in less than a minute he had found a mask on each of the two.

"That's what I calls putty good!" exclaimed the scout, with a laugh. "I reckon yer found them two masks, too, only yer furgot about it. Ha, ha, ha!"

Big Barton cast a glance around, as though he was looking for a chance to escape.

The fact was that the villain was far more uneasy than he had been in a long while.

But he made up his mind right then that he was not going to be taken alive by the three who had caught him so cleverly.

"Well, what are yer goin' ter do about it?" he asked, fixing his eyes on our hero, after he had looked around.

"Take you to our camp first. Then we'll see about running you over to the mining camp you spoke about, if there is such a place," was Wild's reply.

"What's it to you what we are? We never done nothin' ter you, did we?"

"Are you sure you never did anything to us?"

"Sartin, I am. I never sot eyes on yer till jest now, when yer come along."

"Didn't you sneak over to a camp about five miles from here and steal the game we had shot?"

The gaze that was fixed upon his face was such a steady one that Big Barton dropped his eyes.

"Well," said he, lifting them again, "we didn't know who owned ther stuff. We come along an' seen ther venison hangin' there, ready ter be took, an' as we need it, we thought we'd better make off with it."

"Ah! So that is the way it was, eh?"

"Yes, that's ther way."

"Well, what did you attack our camp for, then?"

"Ther wife of one of my pards here wanted ther hat that Englishwoman wears."

Charlie laughed outright at this, and Wild and Jim were forced to smile.

"That's right," spoke up Bolivar Pete. "It was my wife what needed a new hat, an' I allowed that ther woman could well afford ter lose that one."

"Where is your wife?" Wild went on to ask, he being not a little amused at the way the villains talked.

"Over in Scrabble Flat," was the retort.

"That is where you live, then, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"An' that's where we're goin' now! Come on, boys!"

As quick as a wink Big Barton put the spurs to his horse and dashed down the trail.

There was a short bend right there, and as he got to it he turned in the saddle and fired.

Crack!

Charlie answered the shot, but was too late, as the villain got out of sight too soon.

The action was unexpected, even to our hero, and Bolivar Pete and Wince accepted the chance and rode off in the opposite direction.

Wild knew who the leader was, well enough, and he started after him in a hurry, bent on taking him.

Crack!

One of the villains fired just then, and Charlie felt a sharp sting on the side of his head as a lock of his hair was cut off by a bullet.

It was really the most crooked part of the ravine, and in less than three seconds none of the three villains was to be seen.

Bolivar Pete and Wince succeeded in getting through

the narrow pass, and into the valley, but Big Barton had taken the opposite direction and he was riding for his life.

But he did not go far before he found a place where he could dismount and lay for his pursuers.

If Wild had not come in sight of him just as he was doing it he would surely have gone right into a trap.

He knew what the scoundrel was up to right away, so he reined in the sorrel stallion and waited for him to show his hand.

Meanwhile Jim Dart had started after the others, followed by the scout, as soon as he found out that his scalp had only been grazed by the bullet.

But they could not find the two men, as they galloped right past the concealed opening they had gone through.

They were forced to give it up after a search of ten minutes, and then they came galloping back to where our hero was crouching, waiting for the leader of the gang to show his hand.

"Didn't you get them, boys?" Wild asked, as he saw them ride up and dismount.

"No," replied Jim. "They disappeared as quickly as though the ground had opened and swallowed them."

"That is strange. Do you know what I think? The galoots have a hiding place right around here somewhere. But the leader is about fifty yards ahead of here, behind that jutting point of rock. He thought I would come right on, so he could drop me as I went by. But I was just in time to see what he was up to."

"Well, I reckon we'll soon git him, Wild," remarked the scout. "He don't dare ter come out an' go on, that's sure."

He unslung his rifle as he spoke.

Then he took aim at the edge of the rock and fired a shot, just to let the villain know that he meant business.

A mocking laugh rang out, showing how safe the villain felt himself.

It was just then that the rumble of wheels came from up the ravine.

"Sounds as though a stage coach was coming," said Jim.

"That's right," answered Wild. "Well, let it come; it may help us to catch the galoot."

Sure enough, in less than a minute they saw a stage coach, drawn by four mules, coming around a bend.

The driver pulled up when he saw the three standing at the side of the trail, near their horses.

"What's ther trouble?" he called out, looking at them suspiciously.

"We have got a robber cornered down there," Wild answered. "Drive on, and just run him out. He is there alone, and he won't hurt you. He is just waiting for us to come along, so he can pop us over."

The driver drove on until he was half way to the spot. Then a voice called out:

"Halt! Come any further an' I'll shoot!"

The stage coach driver uttered a cry of alarm, and then he strove to turn the outfit around in a very narrow place and came near upsetting it as a result.

Big Barton saw his chance and, mounting his horse,

went galloping from the spot before either Young Wild West or his partners could get a shot at him.

Instead of helping their case, the stage coach had made it possible for the villain to escape.

CHAPTER XI.

WILD AND CHARLIE GO AFTER VENISON AND RAIDERS.

It was nearly five minutes before our friends could get in pursuit of the villain they now wanted so badly to take, for the ravine was so narrow at that point that the mules and the stage coach completely blocked it.

The leaders became frightened, and as the vehicle was in danger of being upset the passengers jumped out and but added to the confusion.

Cheyenne Charlie told the driver a few things that were not to his credit, but that did no good, and when they did get through they all knew that their game was as good as lost, for the time being, anyhow.

They rode on for nearly ten miles, and then, as no traces of the villain were to be found, they turned and rode back for Red Ravine.

They met the stage coach on the way, and it was brought to a halt, and many questions were put to them.

Our hero answered them to the satisfaction of all hands, and then the outfit proceeded on its way.

"We may as well go back to the camp now, I reckon," said Wild. "This has been a mighty queer morning's work. The three galoots were much smarter than I gave them credit for. But never mind, boys. We'll catch them yet. That they have a headquarters around here somewhere is pretty certain, and we must make it our business to find just where it is."

"Well, it ain't so very far from our camp, so we kin run over this way towards night," the scout answered.

They rode on through the ravine, keeping their eyes and ears open.

But they neither saw nor heard anything of the two villains who had disappeared so suddenly.

It was just twelve o'clock when they reached the camp, and they were glad to find a good dinner about ready for them.

"How did you make out, gentlemen?" queried Hooper, looking at them expectantly.

"Well, we found the galoots," was the reply.

"You did?"

"Yes; we found them in what is called Red Ravine, on the Silver City trail."

"Oh!" and Mrs. Hooper clapped her hands with delight. "Did you recover my diamonds?"

"Not yet," Wild replied. "You see, we met with some very hard luck. The robbers outwitted us."

"Oh, that is too bad," and the woman began to cry right away.

Arietta could see that her dashing young lover had met with a disappointment, so she asked him to tell all about it.

Wild did so, declaring that the next time he got the drop on the robbers they would not get away.

Mrs. Hooper soon became quite cheerful again, for Young Wild West seemed to think that her diamonds would surely be recovered; and she declared that she believed she would really enjoy camping out after she got a little more used to it.

As the meal progressed Wild, Charlie and Jim learned all about the incident that Hop Wah had been the chief factor in, and the way it wound up caused them to smile and look over at the darky, who was eating with the two Celestials.

"One thing about Hop is that he is often able to accomplish things that none of the rest of us could do," said Wild, speaking to Hooper and his wife. "He has saved my life giving an Indian chief a loaded cigar, and he has put a whole band of outlaws to flight just by shooting colored fire out of the old-fashioned six-shooter he carries. He has got good qualities, as well as bad ones. I am sorry he took the brandy, though. But I reckon you can make out with what you got back from him."

"Oh, that is all right," declared the mine owner. "But you haven't heard one of the good parts of the joke, though. Mrs. Hooper and myself both declared that the brandy Hop gave us was not as good as that we had lost, and as it was some of the very stuff itself, it shows what imagination will do. Neither of us had any idea that it was our own brandy he was treating us to. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Imagination is good, I reckon," spoke up Charlie, grinning at them. "I've seen 'em fur sale at some of ther railroad stations."

Mrs. Hooper looked amused.

"You say you have seen imaginations offered for sale?" she said, questioningly. "I suppose you means books, or paper-back novels?"

"No, I don't; I mean imaginations, as yer call 'em."

"Do you mind telling me what you call an imagination, Mr. Charlie?"

"No, I don't mind tellin' yer. An' imagination is a hole in a doughnut. If yer shut your eyes when yer go ter eat ther doughnut yer imagine you're eatin' ther hole an' all. I knowed a galoot once what thought he could save ther hole in a doughnut, but that was only imagination, too, fur when he chewed up ther ring around ther hole ther blamed old hole had disappeared."

Charlie never cracked a smile as he gave this explanation, and for a second or two there was a deep silence.

The girls wanted to laugh, but they were waiting to see how Mrs. Hooper took it.

When she finally gave a nod and burst into a laugh all hands joined in.

"Your husband is quite a wit, I find," said the mine owner's wife, nodding to Anna. "I would never have thought it of him. You Americans are curious people, indeed. Just imagine——"

"Don't!" interrupted her husband, holding up his hands. "Let it go at that, Minerya. We haven't any doughnuts here."

For a wonder, she took this good-naturedly.

And as she thought of what the scout had said, later in the day, she laughed more heartily than she had at first.

Charlie and Jim went out to look for the rest of their game shortly after dinner, taking Hop with them.

They found the bears and partridges all right, and they brought in what they wanted, and then prepared to cure the bear meat, an operation that was most interesting to the Englishwoman.

"Partridges for supper," said Wild; "and if Anna will make some corn dodgers I think you will imagine that you're at a first-class hotel, Mrs. Hooper."

"Leave the 'imagine' part of it out, please," was the reply. "But, laying all jokes aside, I believe my appetite is increasing at every meal."

"Let her increase," spoke up the scout. "Ther more hungry yer git ther better yer kin enjoy a meal. 'There ain't nothin' like eatin' an' sleepin' outdoors fur yer health, which I say without jokin'."

"I believe you are right, Mr. Charlie."

About four in the afternoon Wild declared that they must have venison for breakfast, and, since the Raiders of Red Ravine, as the villanous leader had said the robber band was called, had stolen what they had shot that morning, they must strike a deer or antelope in order to have it.

So about four in the afternoon our hero called Charlie, and the two soon started off, leaving Jim in charge of the camp.

Wild and Charlie had a double purpose in going out, as those they left at the camp could easily guess.

They were going to try and shoot some venison, and they were also going to be on the lookout for the raiders. The two took the trail straight for the ravine.

About half way to it Wild suggested that they switch off to the left, where there was a thick patch of woods.

"We might start up something in there," he said. "And if we do we can leave it hanging till we come back from the ravine. I reckon there isn't any one near enough to hear the reports of our rifles now. Anyhow, maybe only one shot will have to be fired. We must not go back without the venison, for I want that Englishwoman to have a breakfast in the morning that will open her eyes."

"That's right, Wild," nodded the scout, as he grinned at the thought of Mrs. Hooper's peculiarities.

They had not gone more than half a mile toward the left when they saw a big-horn deer standing on a craggy point and sniffing the air suspiciously.

It was a good five hundred yards, and without a peep-sight a person must have a pretty long and clear range of vision to cover the deer. But Young Wild West could shoot straight as far as he could see his target, and he certainly could see the big-horn standing on the crag.

"Charlie," said he, "that buck smells us coming, and he will be off like a shot in less than a minute more. I am going to drop him from here. You watch where he falls."

"All right, Wild," was the reply.

The scout knew that the young deadshot could do it, if he said he could, so as soon as Wild came to a halt he did likewise.

Up went the rifle to the boy's shoulder, the sorrel stallion remaining perfectly motionless, so as not to disconcert his aim.

Crang!

As the sharp report rang out the buck leaped forward from the crag and went rolling down the steep descent.

"That was done all right, I reckon," said our hero, nodding with satisfaction. "Now we'll get over there and fix up our venison ready to take to the camp when we come back."

They were not long in reaching the spot where the deer dropped, and in a few minutes they had all the best parts of the meat ready.

The venison was taken back to a spot not far from the trail and hung in a tree, and then they proceeded on their way for Red Ravine.

They were not long in getting there, and as soon as they entered the narrow place they brought their horses down to a walk.

"Somethin' tells me that we're goin' ter have better luck than we did this mornin', Wild," remarked the scout.

"I hope so, Charlie," was the reply.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT WILD AND CHARLIE DISCOVERED.

Young Wild West had come out this time bent on accomplishing something.

He was firmly convinced that there must be some sort of hiding place in the near vicinity of where the two villains had disappeared when his partners gave them chase.

"Charlie," said he, "I reckon you can remember about where it was that the two galoots got out of your sight, can't you?"

"Yes, I know jest where it was. But me an' Jim took a good look around there, an' we couldn't see any kind of a place that was half big enough fur two men an' two horses ter hide."

"You didn't dismount and look, did you?"

"No; but them galoots didn't have no time ter git off their horses, either. They jest went around a sharp turn, an' as we come around, not more'n two seconds later, they was gone. They might have got on ahead to ther next bend in ther trail, but it didn't seem possible ter me an' Jim that they could."

"Well, we will just stop at that sharp bend, so keep your eyes open for it."

The fact was that Charlie had marked the spot well in his mind.

They let their horses jog along a little, keeping on the watch and occasionally turning around and glancing behind them.

But no one appeared to view, and at length they neared the spot they were looking for.

"Here she is," said Charlie, as he brought his horse to a halt. "Right ahead is where ther blamed old stage coach come near upsettin', an' here's ther bend ther two galoots rode around in sich a hurry. If I hadn't thought I was shot-putty bad I reckon I would have dropped one of 'em, though Jim said as how they done it mighty quick, an' that he didn't know whether ter follow you or git after them."

"Don't talk above a whisper, Charlie," Wild cautioned, as he dismounted. "Now, then, we'll jest look around a little."

There were several niches to be seen in the irregular face of the bluff, and our hero made it his business to investigate them as fast as he came to them.

He had seen caves that were covered at their mouths by canvas and other material that was painted in imitation of rock, and he thought that it might be the case now.

Surely the dashing young deadshot was on the right track now, even though it was not exactly as he thought.

One after another of the niches he went to until finally he reached the right one.

The crevice that formed the narrow pass into the little valley did not show from the ravine, since it was at the right side of the niche.

To look into the niche one would see nothing but the bare, red sandstone six feet from the face of the cliff.

When Wild looked into it he had hardly a notion that it was the right place to examine in order to solve the mystery.

But he went right on in, feeling of the rock with his hands, while Charlie remained further out, on the watch.

The next minute our hero gave a start of surprise.

He had found the little passage!

He was not the sort to get excited over anything like that, as the reader knows.

He simply gave a nod of satisfaction, and then walked out to where the scout was waiting.

"I reckon it's all right, Charlie," he said in a whisper. "I've found the way to get to a cave or something."

"What!" gasped his partner, his eyes opening wide.

"That's right. Come and take a look."

Charlie lost no time in doing so.

He was jubilant at the discovery, especially when he saw the fresh imprints of horses' hoofs in the ground.

"What are yer goin' ter do now, Wild?" he asked, eagerly.

"Do? Why, go in there, of course, and find out what is there. This is the entrance to the quarters of the gang that is called the Raiders of Red Ravine, I suppose. Just bring the horses up close here and then you wait. I'll go in a little way and have a look."

The scout nodded.

"If I find that I am in trouble I am going to fire a shot," went on the boy. "I will hold my gun so I can pull the trigger, no matter what happens. If you hear a shot you will know that I am in trouble."

Again the scout nodded.

Then Wild stepped to the fissure and turned in through the narrow opening.

He could see the light of day ahead, so he knew then that he was not entering a cave, but simply going through to another open spot.

Wild was nothing if not daring.

Though he knew that the raiders were a desperate gang, he did not fear the outcome in the least.

The next minute he was at the end of the narrow entrance and stood looking into the little valley.

He could see the log cabin that was almost hidden among the trees and vines, and almost behind it was a

shed, no doubt the stable for the horses belonging to the villainous gang.

Smoke was coming out of the little chimney that was built at one end of the cabin, which showed that there must be some one in it.

Wild took a good look before he made another move.

He noted that the log shanty was only about fifty yards distant from the entrance to the valley, and that there was a chance for one to steal up to it, providing he crept a few feet to the right and got under cover of the rank growth of brushes and vines that followed the inside of the high ridge.

But before going he concluded that he had better let the scout know what he was going to do.

He went out again and told him to go in and take a look.

Charlie did so, while our hero remained on guard.

When he came back his face wore a smile of deep satisfaction.

"I reckon we've got 'em, Wild," he said. "But don't yer think it would be better ter come here after dark? We could do about as we pleased then."

"Come to think of it, that would be a good way," Wild answered. "I suppose there is no need of running too great a risk, when it is not necessary. But I promised Hooper's wife to get her diamonds for her, and it is a pretty sure thing that they are in that shanty. But the night time will be best, I think."

Charlie was proud to think that his advice was to be acted upon.

It was not often that he made a suggestion, but when he did it was generally a good one.

The two went out, and, marking the place well in their minds, so they could not make any mistake, they mounted and rode back through the ravine.

They had not got more than a hundred yards when they heard several shots fired back on the trail.

Then the rumbling of wheels came to their ears.

"Somethin's up, I reckon!" exclaimed the scout. "Sounds like that blamed old stage coach comin' back."

"That's right, Charlie," was the reply. "Come on! I reckon we'll take a hand in this game!"

Back they dashed and they were just in time to see the stage coach come around a bend, hotly pursued by four masked men.

"Whoopee!" yelled Cheyenne Charlie. "Give 'em fits, boys!"

His rifle flew to his shoulder, but not one bit quicker than Wild's did.

Cran-ng!

Two reports blended into one and two of the masked riders dropped.

The others turned and fled, and, it being right close to the entrance to the little valley, it was not strange that they suddenly disappeared.

The stage coach came to a halt and the driver and three passengers were unanimous in thanking our two friends for their timely interference.

"Ther galoots sorter took us by surprise," said the driver, who was not the same one who had passed that way during the morning, "an' I thought ther best thing

we could do was ter keep ahead of 'em. I could drive while them in ther coach could do ther shootin'. Ther robbers fired four or five times, an' so did ther passengers; but no one seemed ter git hit. When you two fellows fired somethin' happened, though!"

"I reckon something always happens when we shoot," Wild answered; "if it is nothing more than a fright to somebody. But we meant those fellows, for they were just in need of taking their medicine. They would have caught you, most likely, if we had not been here, and then some one would have been killed, anyhow. It is better that two of them should go than any one of you fellows, for I take it that you are all honest men."

They looked it, anyway, and they seemed to be pleased at what the dashing young deadshot said.

Of course, they wanted to know who he and his partner were, so Wild told them.

The driver had heard of them, but the passengers had not, for they were not men who had been very long in that part of the country, having come from St. Louis.

"I reckon we'd better see if any one knows them galoots," said the driver, as he got down from the box. "It sorter struck me that I'd seen one of them horses afore."

He walked back to where the two bodies lay in the middle of the road.

Their horses had galloped back along the trail, but were now out of sight.

The driver pulled one of the masks off.

Then he gave a start and exclaimed:

"Tom Duff, ther gambler! By jingo! I didn't think he was one of ther raiders. Why, he was only tellin' me yisterday noon about ther gang that was holdin' forth in Red Ravine!"

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE CAMP OF OUR FRIENDS.

"Take a look at the other galoot; maybe you know him, too," said Wild, nodding to the stage coach driver.

The man removed the other mask.

"It's Jack Brennan!" he gasped. "Jack was considered ter be very honest, an' he ain't been seen much around Scrabble Flat lately. Well, by jingo! No wonder Tom Duff was tellin' me how dangerous ther Raiders of Red Ravine was! He was one of 'em himself. I reckon ther boys at ther camp will be surprised when they hears this, fur no one thought Tom was anything more than a card sharp."

"Where do you suppose the rest went?" one of the passengers asked.

"Oh, they have got a hiding place around here somewhere, I reckon," our hero answered. "But you folks need not mind about it. Go on! We will find it, and then we'll make short work of the Raiders of Red Ravine."

The passengers got into the stage, satisfied that they had experienced a narrow escape, and, mounting the box, the driver cracked his whip and started off.

Our two friends waited until they had got a good distance ahead, and then they rode along after them.

"The other two galoots got into the little valley, of course," said Wild, speaking in a low tone to the scout. "We will let them go now; but after dark we will come back and do some business."

They rode along slowly until they reached the end of the ravine, and then they headed for the spot they had left the slain deer at.

This time they found their game all right, and, thinking it quite enough for one day, they rode on back to the camp.

"Well, here is the venison, all right," our hero remarked, as he dismounted and handed over the results of their short hunt to the cook. "I reckon the raiders didn't get this chunk of venison, anyhow."

"Did you find out anything about my diamonds?" asked Mrs. Hooper, anxiously.

"Well, we know just about where they are," was the reply. "I think we will have them for you before to-morrow morning."

All hands were surprised to hear this declaration.

"Did you locate the hiding place of the raiders, then, Wild?" Arietta asked.

"Yes, we found it," he answered, smiling at her. "It was only a question of a thorough search, after all. The raiders live in a log shanty that is built in a little valley, the entrance of which is right in Red Ravine. It is a hidden entrance, though, and any one not acquainted with the devices used by outlaws would hardly find it."

"Well, you and Charlie could find such a place, if any one could," spoke up the scout's wife.

"That is true, Anna," said Arietta.

Hooper's wife was growing more hopeful every time she received a report, and she was really beginning to enjoy the suspense, so to speak.

"We have been teaching Mrs. Hooper how to discharge a revolver," said Anna, after the conversation lagged a little. "She can do it quite well now."

"Kin she hit anything?" Charlie asked, looking a bit incredulous.

"Oh, I can hit the ground!" exclaimed the woman, proudly. "Can't I, girls?"

"Well, that's a mighty big target, I reckon," and Charlie grinned more than ever. "If yer shut yer eyes an' shoot off a gun ther bullet is bound ter hit ther ground, unless it happens ter strike a tree or rock. That's a mighty sure thing."

"That's pretty certain, Charlie," laughed Hooper. "But, really, she can do something that I thought she would be a long while trying to do, even."

Just then a vulture was seen soaring about in the air, high above the earth.

Hop was the first to call attention to it.

"Um nicee lady allee samee gittee chance to shootee um biggee bird, so be," he said, smiling blandly.

"Shoot that bird!" cried the woman, scornfully. "Why, no one could do that. It is a mile high."

"Oh, it isn't as high as that, Mrs. Hooper," Arietta said. "I could fetch the vulture down myself."

"Do you mean that, Arietta?"

Both Hooper and his wife had learned to call our

friends by their first names now, and this made it more sociable.

Arietta picked up her rifle.

The vulture was probably two hundred yards above them, and it was soaring around, evidently with the intention of alighting on a peak near by.

Arietta had a feeling of disgust for birds and beasts of a carnivorous nature, and she could shoot them without a feeling of hesitancy.

She placed the rifle to her shoulder and, taking a quick aim, pressed the trigger.

Crang!

As the report rang out the vulture's wings flapped convulsively, and then down it came toward the earth.

"My!" exclaimed Mrs. Hooper. "Isn't that wonderful, Harris?"

"A mighty good shot," was the reply.

"There ain't every one as kin do it, I reckon," the scout hastened to say.

The big bird dropped about a hundred yards from the camp, and being anxious to see it, Hooper conducted his wife to the spot.

Charlie went along, for he had found that it was not very safe to let such people go around alone, since the raiders were not located so very far away.

But nothing happened to interfere with them, and Mrs. Hooper soon saw all she wanted to of the vulture.

When they returned to the camp she looked at Arietta and said:

"Now, if you will show me how to shoot a rifle I will be much obliged to you?"

"Certainly. You ought to be able to do it, if I can. Of course, you would have to practice a great deal before you could shoot straight. But the mere firing of it is nothing. Just place the stock tight to your shoulder like this, and then press the trigger. That is all there is to that part of it."

She showed her, and then the woman took the rifle rather gingerly and placed the butt of the stock to her shoulder.

She kept the muzzle pointed in the air, for Arietta took care to hold it that way while she was getting it into position.

Crang!

The rifle was discharged almost before she was aware that she had caused it, and the mine owner's wife gave a startled cry.

"You are not hurt, are you?" Arietta asked, with a smile.

"Oh, no," was the reply. "But it startled me. Harris," turning to her husband, "I believe I will have to learn how to shoot."

"Good!" was the reply. "You are coming around all right, Minerva. If you only get your diamonds back you will begin to think that the Wild West of America is a pretty nice sort of a place, after all."

"I shall try hard to make myself think that way, because all your interests are here, Harris."

This was the best thing Hooper had heard from her yet, and he began to think that it was really a fortunate

thing that the raiders had held them up and robbed them.

It was now time for the evening meal, so the cook got busy and prepared it.

The appetite of Mrs. Hooper seemed to keep on improving, and she was gradually dropping the table manners she had assumed at first.

The sun sank in the West and then it was not long before the howling of a wolf could be heard in the distance.

"What is that, Harris?" asked the mine owner's wife, apprehensively.

"Nothing but a hungry wolf, Minerva," was the reply.

"Nothing but a hungry wolf!" repeated the woman, looking at him in amazement. "As if that were not quite enough to shock one. The idea! Suppose it got at us?"

"Don't worry about that," spoke up our hero. "The wolf has smelled what we left of our game, and he is simply calling others to join him in a banquet. They won't bother us, though. They seldom attack a person, unless they are nearly starved, and in such numbers that they feel that it is safe to do it. I reckon we can take care of all the wolves there are around here."

She was partly appeased at hearing this, but as the hideous howling continued at intervals and was being answered from another direction, she grew very nervous.

"Don't leave the camp to-night," she implored, addressing Wild. "I won't feel safe if you are not here."

"All right," he answered. "I won't then."

Then he turned to Charlie and added, in a whisper: "We won't go to-night, then; but it will be mighty early in the morning when we do strike out, though. We will leave about two hours before daylight."

"That'll be about their best time, anyhow," declared the scout. "Their galoots won't be lookin' for us then."

As the evening wore on the howling of the wolves increased, and once, when the animals came pretty close to the camp, Mrs. Hooper seemed in danger of being taken with a fit.

But a little of the brandy revived her, and then she gradually made herself accustomed to it.

The fact that no one else seemed to be alarmed assured her that there could be no danger, after all.

The night passed on, and about two o'clock Wild and Charlie saddled their horses and, mounting, rode from the camp, leaving Jim in charge.

CHAPTER XIV.

WILD GETS THE DIAMONDS.

Wild and Charlie were not long in getting to the ravine.

The air was clear and rather cold in the early morning, but they were just in trim for the work that was ahead of them.

If it was at all possible, our hero wanted to get the diamonds Mrs. Hooper had been robbed of.

Just how he was going to accomplish it he did not know; but he depended upon luck being with him a great deal, and he hoped that something would turn up on this occasion.

"It ain't likely that ther galoots will be lookin' fur us at this time of ther night," observed the scout, as they rode along.

"No, Charlie," was the reply. "But the first thing we will find out is whether they have taken charge of the bodies of the two who got shot this afternoon. It is most likely that they have. But we want to find out, anyhow."

When they neared the spot where the tragedy had occurred they slowed their horses down to a walk.

In this way they proceeded, the declining moon in the west lighting the way for them.

They soon found that the dead raiders had been carried away, and then they got ready to go into the little valley.

"We had better take our horses in, too, I reckon," Wild said. "We can leave them right close to the entrance, and then go to the house on foot."

"That's right."

Wild dismounted and looked at his watch.

They had taken their time, and he found that they had been just about half an hour in getting there, for it was now twenty-five minutes to three.

They did not ride through the opening, but after they had made sure that there was no guard at the other side they led their horses on through.

The high cliffs hid the moon, so it was pretty dark in the valley.

To be sure that their horses would not stray they tied them to a couple of trees adjacent to the mouth of the narrow pass, but among the bushes, so they would not be apt to be discovered in case of the arrival of any of the raiders, who might be out.

Then Wild and the scout made their way cautiously for the log shanty.

The path was a beaten one, and it was easy to follow, even in the dark.

As they got into the grove in which the building was located a light suddenly appeared in one of the windows.

This was a little surprising, since all had been in darkness before.

But neither Wild nor Charlie considered that the light had anything to do with their presence in the vicinity.

Villains would hardly show a light when they thought they were in danger.

They lost no time in hurrying to the window.

There had once been four panes of glass in the window, but only two now remained.

The spaces for the missing ones were filled with rags to keep out the cold.

Wild soon got where he could look through one of the dirty panes.

He was not a little surprised to see a woman moving about the room, which was used as a kitchen and dining room.

It was Mag, the wife of Bolivar Pete.

She had started the work of kindling a fire, which showed that she was going to begin the day rather early.

But when our two friends saw her fetch out a wash-tub they readily understood that she meant to get the washing done before breakfast.

Having put the water on to boil, Mag stood in a thoughtful attitude for a moment, and then went to the closet that was in a corner.

From this she took a small package wrapped in newspaper, and when Wild and Charlie saw it they grew very much interested.

The hag, for such she could certainly be called, as the reader knows, sat down on a chair right before the window our two friends were peering through.

Then she opened the package and began looking at the contents gloatingly.

Wild craned his neck and managed to get a glimpse at what she was so absorbed in.

His heart gave a bound when he saw that there were some pieces of jewelry in the woman's hand.

That it was that which had been stolen from the mine owner's wife he had not the least doubt.

One push on the bundle of rags that stopped the opening in the sash and he might be able to grab the diamonds from her.

But the chances were against him, for she would leap from the spot at the first sound, most likely.

But a way to recover the stolen jewels soon showed itself.

When she had gloated over them for a while the hag carefully wrapped them in the paper again, and then, placing the package on the chair, went to the stove to put some wood in it and replenish the fire.

This was Wild's opportunity.

He pulled the bunch of rags out without making the least sound, and, reaching in, he picked up the little package.

Back into the aperture went the rags, and Mag did not know the least thing about it.

Our hero took the scout by the arm and pulled him away from the window.

"I reckon I've got Mrs. Hooper's diamonds, Charlie," he whispered. "What do you think of that for a clever little trick?"

"It couldn't be beat, not if yer had made it all up yourself," was the whispered retort.

"Well, you will see something funny in a little while. Just wait till she misses the diamonds! Let's go around to the other window and watch."

The window referred to was in the end of the building, and there was but one pane of glass in that one.

This was pretty well covered with dust and cobwebs, but our friends knew they would be able to see well enough through it to note the actions of the woman.

Mag fixed the fire in good shape and then returned to the chair.

When she found that the paper was gone she gave a start and muttered something that was unintelligible to our two friends.

Then she felt over the chair, as though she thought her eyes might be deceiving her, and, failing to find the diamonds, she moved it and looked on the floor.

Then she shook the chair and got down upon her hands and knees.

But it was no use. The diamonds had vanished, and it was in such a mysterious way that the woman was dazed.

For fully half an hour she kept up the search, pausing now and then to shake her fist at a door, which shut off the adjoining room.

The fact was that Mag was beginning to think that one of the men belonging to the gang of raiders had stolen the diamonds, her husband, perhaps.

Suddenly she picked up an axe and approached the door.

Wild and Charlie thought she meant to break down the door, but such was not her intentions.

The door opened to the little apartment that was used as a sleeping place for herself and husband.

She opened the door in a hurry and found Bolivar Pete sound asleep, just as she had left him when she arose so early.

But this was not entirely satisfactory to her.

Stepping into the little room, she raised the axe threateningly and exclaimed:

"Wake up, you snorin' galoot! Give me them diamonds!"

"What's ther matter, Mag?" queried the startled villain, as he got up and saw her standing over him with the upraised axe, her black eyes flashing fire.

"What did yer sneak out an' take them diamonds when I wasn't lookin' fur?" she demanded.

"What! I ain't took no diamonds, Mag. I knows a whole lot better than that. What do yer mean? Where did yer put 'em, anyhow?"

Mag was forced to believe her husband was innocent, so she lowered the axe.

The Cute One hurriedly dressed himself and came into the kitchen part of the shanty.

"Tell me all about it, Mag," he said, coaxingly. "It can't be that ther diamonds is lost. You've put 'em somewhere, an' you've furgot where."

"No, I ain't. I had 'em in my hands less than half an hour ago. I was lookin' at 'em, an' I wrapped 'em up an' left 'em layin' right on that there chair, while I put some wood in ther stove. My back was turned, an' some one stole 'em while I wasn't lookin'. • Pete, I've got ter have them diamonds if I kill every one in ther shanty ter git 'em!"

The Cute One was more keen than his better half.

"Some one might hav reached through ther winder an' took 'em while yer wasn't lookin', Mag," he said.

She flew to the window, and as her hand hit the bunch of rags it fell outside.

"Git in there an' tell them galoots that unless I git them diamonds back in five minutes' time there'll be bloodshed in this shanty!" she cried.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SURPRISE AT THE LOG SHANTY.

The Raiders of Red Ravine had been very quiet since the death of their two companions.

They had buried them in the valley, not far from the shanty, and now, as there were but five of them, they felt that they would have to remain close for a while.

The four who had made the attack on the stage coach were those returning from the mining camp, as can readily be guessed.

The liquor they had imbibed while at Scrabble Flat had only made them all the more reckless, and when they overtook the stage coach as it was on its way through the ravine they suddenly decided to hold it up.

So they put on their masks and followed it until the right spot was reached, and then they galloped after their prey.

But they got much the worst of it when dashing Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie appeared on the scene, and, leaving their two companions where they fell, the other two managed to get into the valley.

Big Barton was staggered when he heard what had happened.

He had heard the shooting, and imagined that his men were up to something, but he had no idea that two of them were going to drop out of the gang.

Since the burial of the dead the five had remained right at the shanty.

It happened that the four in the room that was allotted to them for a sleeping quarters were all sound asleep when the disturbance started in the other part of the shanty.

Wince was the only one to get up when he heard it, however, and he listened to what was going on.

He soon got wind of it, so he decided to go and help investigate the mystery.

He got his garments on and opened the door just in time to see Mag standing there, while Bolivar Pete was just opening the outside door.

"What does I hear?" cried Wince. "Somebody has stole ther diamonds, Mag?"

"Yes, you crawlin' galoot!" was the reply. "You're ther one as done it, too! What are yer doin' up?"

"I got up when I heard yer yellin' at Pete an' tellin' him that some one had stole your diamonds," Wince answered, backing away from her. "Yer don't think I would steal ther diamonds, do yer, Mag? Don't say anything like that. I'm loyal ter all hands, an' you know it. I'll stick as long as any one will, an' don't yer furgit it!"

Meanwhile Bolivar Pete had gone out to make sure that none of the men had come out from the door that opened from the other part of the house.

Like his wife, he thought that one of the gang had committed the theft.

He found the door closed tightly, and, hearing the war of words between Mag and Wince, he came back again.

Then followed a hot discussion, but it resulted in both Mag and her husband being convinced that the diamonds had not been taken by any one in the house.

Big Barton and the rest soon came into the room.

"This are mighty strange," the leader declared. "I reckon I'll have ter look after that eight thousand dollars I got from ther man, since what we took from his wife is gone."

He pulled out a wallet, opened it and took a look inside.

"It's all right," he said, nodding. "No one has got

that yet, anyhow. I'd like ter see ther galoot as could get it, either!"

"Well, just hand it over!"

Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie stepped in just then, and the young deadshot lost no time in taking up the challenging words of the leader of the raiders.

It so happened that Big Barton and the other two villains, who had been the last to come out, did not have their belts on yet, and they were without their weapons.

The entrance of the two were so sudden that the villains and the hag were astounded, not to say, dismayed.

But the deadly tubes that stared them in the face told them plainly that they were facing death, and before Big Barton fully realized it the wallet was taken from his hand by our hero.

"I reckon this is a pretty good game, all right!" Wild exclaimed. "Just hold up your hands, every one of you! The first galoot that tries to take a trick will be put out of the game!"

As he stood between them and the door leading to the adjoining room, they had no chance to get their weapons.

Wince and the Cute One were relieved of theirs at the start by Cheyenne Charlie, so the five villains were surely in the power of our two friends.

But the woman!

She was different.

As she had said, she feared no one, and as soon as she could gather her scattered wits she made ready to do something.

She picked up the axe, just as the five men were forced to walk to a corner of the room, and ran at Wild and Charlie.

"Drop that, you hag!" cried the scout, as he pointed his gun at her.

But she never stopped a bit.

Crack!

Wild fired and the bullet hit the handle of the axe so close to one of Mag's hands that she sprang back and dropped it.

"Catch that woman and tie her up!" shouted the dashing young deadshot, nodding to Big Barton and the man next to him. "Do as I say, or I'll drop you, and save the trouble of hanging you!"

The big villain evidently thought it best to obey, for he promptly caught the woman and pulled her back.

Then the other started to help him.

But they could not handle her, it seemed, for Mag was as strong as an ox just then.

"You have got just three minutes to tie that woman so she can't make any more trouble!" called out Wild.

That was enough!

All five of them fell upon her, and though she struggled like a wildcat the hag was soon overpowered and bound.

Wild saw that they really made the knots good and tight, and then he called for them to step up, one at a time, and be tied by the scout.

Wince was the first to come.

There was plenty of rope in the shanty, and Charlie

took a lariat that was hanging to a nail in the wall and proceeded to tie the men together.

Three were quickly done.

Then Big Barton stepped over, as though he meant to allow himself to be tied without making a struggle.

Instead, he pushed the helpless trio hard against Wild and Charlie, and they all went to the floor in a heap.

Out of the shanty leaped the leader, and after him came the Cute One.

The fact was that the leader had suggested the trick, and when he got outside he made for the shed where the horses were kept with wonderful quickness.

"We've got ter light out, Bart!" he exclaimed. "There's nothin' here fur us no more. 'Come on!"

It so happened that bridles were on two of the horses and, snapping the bits in their mouths, the two villains mounted bareback and rode away in the darkness for the ravine.

Without a single weapon to defend themselves, they went on through the narrow pass, and once out into the ravine they turned toward the mining camp.

The two villains, having such a start, made good their escape, and shortly after daylight they rode into Scrabble Flat.

It had been the identical wallet that had been taken from Hooper that Wild had got possession of; but only the money that belonged to the mine owner was in it.

Big Barton had other money, and plenty of it.

Bolivar Pete was not so badly fixed in this line, either, so before they had been in the mining camp fifteen minutes the two villains were fitted out, and ready to go and seek their revenge, and possibly save their comrades and Mag.

"I couldn't sneak off without tryin' ter save 'em, Bart," the Cute One declared. "We might be able ter wing them two galoots—fur there was only two of 'em."

"We will wing them, all right. But we will have to follow them to their camp to do it, I s'pose. They've took ther boys an' Mag there, most likely, afore this."

"That's right. Well, I'm in this thing ter win or die!"

"An' so am I!"

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

Wild knew that it would not do to run after the escaping pair and let the others be in the shanty, so he simply called out to Charlie, as he got upon his feet:

"Let them go; we have done fine as it is. We'll catch them later."

"We won't git to ther camp in time fur breakfast this mornin', I reckon," remarked the scout, with a chuckle.

"Well, never mind that. Maybe there is a shorter way from Scrabble Flat to get there. If there is we can hurry back."

But luck was with them, it seemed, for they were just emerging from the little pass into the ravine when a dozen mounted men came in view.

One of them was a passenger who had been in the stage coach the afternoon before, for, when they came to a halt, Wild heard and recognized his voice.

"Hello!" our hero called out. "You people are just in time, I reckon."

"Why, it is Young Wild West!" shouted the man, excitedly. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh, we came to look for the rest of the gang of raiders," our hero answered. "We've got them all but two now. That is pretty well, I reckon, especially for two of us to do."

The party proved to be a posse from Alkali Flat, with the Sheriff in the lead.

They had come to hunt down the Raiders of Red Ravine, they declared, and were sorry that they were too late to take a hand in the game.

"Well, it is all right, Sheriff," Wild said. "We've got them for you, and we will turn them over to you. The other two went somewhere, but the chances are that they will be found."

It was just getting daylight when our friends turned the prisoners over to the Sheriff, after telling him all that had transpired.

Then they set out for the camp, leaving the posse to return to Alkali Flat.

As they were within a couple of hundred yards of the camp Charlie suddenly espied the tracks of a bear.

"Let's git ther bear, Wild," he said. "It will be start-in' in on ther second day's hunt putty good."

"All right," was the reply, and then they both dismounted and started to follow the bear's tracks, which surely had been made since the day before.

When Wild found that he was getting very close to the camp he determined to take a peep and see what was going on.

"Go ahead and follow up the bear, Charlie," he said; and then he pushed his way through the bushes and came upon a startling sight.

Arietta was busy assisting to get the breakfast ready.

Crouching upon a rock, a few feet away, was a catamount, poised to spring upon her.

Wild quickly recovered from his surprise and his rifle flew to his shoulder, and he pressed the trigger as it leaped.

The sharp report rang out on the still morning air, and, with a scream, Arietta turned and saw the animal drop almost at her feet.

Charlie forgot all about the bear and came running for the spot, while Wing, who had been standing over the fire, busy with the coffee, uttered a cry of fear and turned around.

But Arietta quickly realized what had happened, and, with a glad cry, she sprang to meet her dashing young lover.

It was just then that Mrs. Hooper came running out of the tent, a blanket wrapped around her, and screaming for all she was worth.

It so happened that Arietta had been the first to awaken that morning, and she had promptly relieved Jim and urged him to get an hour's sleep.

Jim had been asleep just about that length of time when the girl aroused Wing and told him to kindle the fire.

This was done, and she got out the leather bag that

contained the utensils they used to cook and eat from, so she might have the breakfast ready when the rest awoke.

She had never dreamed of the presence of a catamount, which had no doubt been attracted to the spot by the smell of the fresh meat they had.

Then Wild told of the great success he and Charlie had. hands she threw aside all reserve, and actually gave the dashing young deadshot a hug.

Then she did the same to the scout, who grinned:

"I knowed you'd begin ter git Americanized putty soon, Mrs. Hooper!" he said. "Ther first thing you know you'll be yellin' like a real cowboy. Whopee! Wow! Wow! Yip, yip, yip!"

The second day's hunt had not been so successful as the first, but lots of small game had been shot, and even Mrs. Hooper had tried her hand and had killed a rabbit.

Wild and Charlie, assisted by the two Chinamen, were gathering in the game when a rifle cracked and a bullet flew past our hero's head.

He turned and saw the form of a man dodging behind a clump of bushes, a hundred yards away.

But Charlie had grabbed his rifle first, and he took aim at the clump of bushes and fired a shot. A yell of mortal agony sounded, and a man pitched forward into view and fell upon his face.

It was no other than Big Barton!

Bolivar Pete fired a shot and started to run.

But he never took three steps before the scout's rifle cracked again.

"I reckon you need not worry about any further trouble from them galoots, Mrs. Hooper," said Charlie, as he answered a question in regard to the scoundrels. "They're all gone now. Whoopee! Wow! Wow! Yip, yip, yip!"

The next day the hunting continued, and the result was all that could be expected.

On the following day they went to Scrabble Flat, where our hero reported what had happened to the last of the two raiders.

Everything had turned out all right, and one of the most pleased of them all was the mine owner's wife.

In three days she had become more Americanized than she ever would, if she had not met Young Wild West and his friends, she declared.

"Well, that's all right, and I am mighty glad of it," Wild answered. "We have had a good time during our three days' hunt, and we managed to break up a very dangerous gang during the time. There will be no more Raiders of Red Ravine for a while, I reckon."

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST AND 'SILVER STREAM': or, THE WHITE GIRL CAPTIVE OF THE SIOUX," which will be the next number (284) of "Wild West Weekly."

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SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

In speaking of the pagan atrocities which have for centuries back been perpetrated in the name of Christ, Bishop Joseph F. Berry told this story: "It is said," he began, "that when the great Spanish Marshal Navarez lay dying, his confessor asked him if he had any enemies. 'No,' whispered the marshal; 'I have none.' But the priest, reflecting on the stormy life of the dying man, repeated: 'Think, sir; have you no enemies? None whatever?' 'No,' said the marshal, 'none.' And he added tranquilly: 'I have shot them all.'"

Steam turbines, says a writer in *La Nature*, have hardly entered the domain of the practical as a motive power for great ships before they are threatened with the rivalry of gas motors. Mr. James MacKechnie, of Barrow-in-Furness, regards recent experiments as having demonstrated the practicability of powerful gas motors for ocean-going vessels. Among the advantages claimed for gas-motors are their more effective transformation of heat into work, their relative lightness and compactness, and the absence of smokestacks. This last item is urged as a matter of prime importance for warships.

When King Alfonso recently visited Cambridge he offered the master a cigarette. The master abhors "tobacker," but he took the "coffin nail" and did his best with it. When the Prince of Wales, now the King of England, was Gladstone's guest, he offered his host a cigarette, and the Great Commoner took it and did his best. These recollections warrant the *London News* in saying that probably King Edward is responsible for the consumption of more tobacco all over the world than any other man. It was his example, quietly set and persisted in, that gradually destroyed the inveterate prejudice against smoking that still ruled in society when he was a young man. One can gather a good deal of the strength of this objection from the early Victorian writers, but not the full extent of it. Lady Dorothy Nevill, in her notes on the country house life of those days, tells us of the precautions men who smoked would take, on going out for a walk, not to light their cigars until there was no longer any chance of the aroma being perceived in the house.

Of all the modern languages, English is undoubtedly the most difficult to acquire. In addition to the ordinary pitfalls of form and idioms that entrap the foreigner struggling for mastery of a strange tongue, there is one so peculiar to ours that nothing even remotely similar presents itself in any other language, whether ancient or modern. This is the paradoxical

word; the word which has two meanings diametrically opposed to each other. It is not enough that, with all the wealth of words borrowed from half a score of other languages, we must impose a double and often a multiple burden on some poor, little, monosyllabic word like "get," for instance, whose meanings are legion. Our language must needs confound the student at the gates with the paradox. To give a few examples: The word "let" means to "allow" or "permit"; and likewise to "prevent," "hinder," or "refuse," meanings diametrically opposite. "I will let you do it," in the former sense is hardly more common in use than the phrase "without let or hindrance," and Shakespeare has it, "By Heaven! I'll make a ghost of him that lets (prevents) me." "Cleave" means to split asunder, as well as to "adhere" or "bind" closely. Scott makes Marmion threaten to "cleave the Douglas' head," while Holy Writ enjoins upon the husband to "cleave unto his wife." Another example is "lurid," which means both a "dull red" and also a "pale green" hue—tints that are exactly opposed in the scale of colors. While the former is the more common meaning, the latter is more scholarly correct, as the word is derived through the Latin from the Greek adjective meaning "greenish hued." "Again we have "fast." A horse that is "fast" may be in rapid motion or standing tied stockstill. In either sense, whether of motion or immobility, the word emphasizes the idea. Examples of this bewildering pitfall of our tongue might be multiplied indefinitely. It may be said of the English-speaking world as it was said of the old Romans: that their supremacy is due to the fact that they do not have to learn their own language.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

Ransom—Never judge a man by the umbrella he carries.
Beckly—No. It may not be his.

"I bet I'd get married before the year was out, and she bet I wouldn't." "Who lost?" "Both of us."

Bumpus—Give me a pair of lady's shoes, please? Shopman—What size? Bumpus—Oh, no matter. They're for my wife, and she won't be pleased anyway.

Johnny (to uncle whose sole ambition is to reduce his weight)—You're getting much thinner than you were, unk. Uncle (delighted)—Think so, my lad? Johnny—Yes, on top.

"Marriage," remarked the moralizer, "is a lottery." "Yes," rejoined the demoralizer, "but it's one of the games of chance that clergymen do not try to discourage."

"For my part, I can't see the difference between gambling and speculating by buying or selling things on a margin." "There is a big difference. A man who gambles has a certain number of chances out of a thousand to win."

George Golden and his friend Casey, a pair of well-known American humorists, once sailed for Europe. Relating the events of the trip afterward, Golden remarked: "Talk about seasickness! Had I known that Casey was afflicted that way we never should have gone abroad. The very first day out Casey collapsed, and refused to brace up again. I tried all sorts of remedies on him, but without avail. All he would mutter was, 'Oh, musha, musha! I'm so ill!' Finally I cried out, 'Can't you keep anything on your stomach, man?' 'Only my hands, George,' he groaned, 'only my hands!'"

The Doctor's First Patient.

By COL. RALPH FENTON.

About thirty years ago a young man who had passed through all the preparatory steps took a suit of rooms in London, had a large brass plate fixed to his door, on which his name and calling were set forth in large letters, and for the benefit of night comers caused the same to be inscribed on three sides of a large green glass lantern which hung before his house.

Late one evening in December the young doctor sat alone in his little study, with his feet resting on a fender before the fire.

The night was stormy, the wind sighed and howled down his chimney, and large heavy drops splashed violently against his window.

Then in a state nearly akin to sleep the doctor began to wonder who his first patient would be, what would be the disease, at what time of day or night he would be called, whether he should perform a cure, or whether the patient would die in spite of all his care.

Then again he thought of Rosa, fell fairly asleep, and dreamed of her till he heard her clear, sweet voice, and felt the weight of her small, soft hand on his shoulder.

A hand was indeed laid on his shoulder, but it was neither small nor soft. It was the rough, coarse member of a thick-headed boy from the orphan house, who had been bound to the doctor by the church-wardens, in consideration of board, clothing and a shilling per week, besides a promise to bring up the boy to his own calling, if he should manifest a capacity for learning.

"Mr. Doctor, a lady! A lady, Mr. Doctor!" screamed the boy, as he shook the doctor by the shoulder.

"A lady?" exclaimed the young doctor, half believing his dream to be reality, and almost hoping the lady might be his dearly beloved Rosa. "Where—where?"

"Here—there—yonder—yonder!" answered the boy, pointing to a glass door which opened into the passage.

The young physician shuddered with a perceptible start as his eyes met those of his first patient. So near the door that her face almost touched the panes of glass stood a woman of uncommon height, in deep mourning.

The upper part of her form was enveloped in a large black shawl, and a black veil covered her face.

She stood upright and still, and although the doctor perceived that her piercing eyes were fixed upon him from behind the veil, she made no motion of salutation.

"Do you wish for my advice?" said the young physician, opening the door.

The veiled person neither answered nor moved, and he repeated the question in a tone somewhat stern. The person nodded.

"Then I would beg of you to walk in," added the doctor.

The person stepped one step forward and turned her head toward the boy, who stood with mouth and eyes wide open, while the cold sweat dropped from his face.

"Go out, Tom, draw the curtain and shut the door," said the doctor.

The boy obeyed the instructions so far that he drew a green silk curtain over the glass door, shut it, and then, kneeling down, put his right eye to the keyhole.

The doctor drew a chair to the fire, and by a motion invited his silent patient to be seated.

The veiled form approached, and by the firelight the doctor perceived that her garments were dripping with water.

"You are very wet," said he.

"Yes, I am," answered a hollow voice.

"And are you ill?" he asked.

"I am deadly sick! Bodily not, but spiritually."

"May I ask an explanation of your words?"

"It is not for myself I ask your aid. If I were bodily sick I should not have come at this hour, nor in such a night, nor alone. Four-and-twenty hours from this, if I find myself sick unto death, I shall thank heaven. It is for another I come to you. It may be insanity; but night after night, in the long, weary hours of watching and weeping have I thought over this plan. I know that help from men is a cold and empty hope, but I cannot think of his being put into his grave without an attempt to save him."

A shudder passed over the whole form of the speaker, and the young hearer was inexpressibly shocked.

He was just at the commencement of his professional career, and had as yet witnessed none of those scenes of distress which so soon harden the heart, or the nerves, at least.

He started from his chair, and said hastily:

"If you consider the sufferer is already beyond hope, every moment is precious. I will go with you instantly. Have you called in any other physician?"

"No!" answered the stranger, folding her hands. "Earlier it would have been useless. It is useless now."

The young doctor stared at the riddler as if he meant to read her meaning through her veil, but it was too thick.

"You are ill!" said he, in a composed tone, "believe me, you are the sick one. Drink this," at the same time reaching her a glass of water. "Compose yourself and tell me as distinctly as possible where the disease is, and how long you have suffered."

The stranger raised the glass to her mouth without lifting her veil, but placed it again on the table without tasting, and burst into tears.

After a few moments she said in a broken voice:

"When you hear what I have to say, you will think me mad. I have been charged with insanity; but few treat me so kindly as you do. My health or sickness is nothing; I would gladly give every moment's ease that remains to me if I might redeem, by my sufferings, the life of him for whose sake I am here. To-morrow he will be in mortal danger, yet to-day you cannot see him—cannot help him."

"I will do nothing to increase your distress," said the physician. "I wish not to press myself into your mysterious secret, but your words convey a contradiction I cannot unravel. He of whom you speak is this night struggling with death. My skill might probably be of use, and yet you assure me I cannot see him. In the morning, you say, human help will be useless, and then I am required to go to him. If he is dear as your words and appearance indicate, why not go to him before help comes too late? If he die while we linger, what a weight will rest on you!"

"It will rest on others, not on me," answered the stranger.

"That no part may rest on me, give me your address and the hour at which I shall call," said the physician.

"If you will come, come at nine," answered the stranger.

"One question before you go. Is the sick person under your care?" said the physician.

"No," answered the stranger.

"And if I give you directions how to treat the patient till I come, can you make use of them?"

"No," said the stranger, and tears burst out afresh.

Early the next morning the young doctor, according to the directions received, took his way to Walworth.

Thirty years ago this place was only inhabited by people of a doubtful character.

The houses were far apart, old, ruinous, and miserable in every respect.

After many contradictory answers and unintelligible directions—ankle deep in black, boggy mud—the young doctor stood at length before the house where his first patient was.

It was a poor, gloomy-looking building.

The lower windows were all closed with strong outside shutters, and the one above was covered with a thick yellow curtain.

No living thing was to be seen.

"I stood several minutes before the house," said the doctor, when he afterwards told the story, "and went entirely around it before I could muster courage enough to knock. I am not a very timid man, and yet I am forced in truth to confess that my heart beat quicker than usual when I heard whispering within. After some time steps approached the door, the bolts and chains were withdrawn, and the door opened. A man stood before me whose demeanor was not greatly calculated to give me new courage. He was a tall man with a pale, haggard face, over which his thick, black hair hung like a veil."

"Walk in!" said the man, in a deep, sullen tone.

I walked in, and he replaced the bars and chains of the door.

"Have I come early enough?" said I.

"Too early," answered the man. "But you will have to wait only five minutes."

He opened the door and went out. I heard him fasten it on the outside.

The place in which I found myself a prisoner was damp and cold. Two stools and a table were the only furniture. A handful of fire on the hearth only served to melt the frost which ran in streams down the walls.

I took a survey of the room, and then seated myself on one of the stools by the fire to await the result of my first call in the way of my profession.

I heard something move in the room above.

Soon after wheels came toward the house—they stopped—the chains of the door were unfastened—voices spoke low—footsteps went up the stairs, and I felt certain something heavy was carried up between two men.

The bearers returned again down the stairs, the door was again bolted and chained, and the wheels rolled away.

I arose and searched around the room to find some place by which I might escape to the open air, when the door suddenly opened and my visitor of the evening before entered the room, in the same dress, with the thick veil over her face.

She made a sign for me to follow her.

I hesitated. Her silence and the unusual height of her form excited in me a suspicion that a disguised man stood before me; but the heavy sobs which shook her whole frame soon removed my suspicions, and I followed her.

She led me upstairs to the door of a chamber, and made me a sign to enter.

The chamber contained a large chest, two chairs and a bed, without curtains. The yellow curtain I had seen from without made the chamber so dark that I stood still; but the stranger, with a cry of anguish, rushed by me and threw herself on her knees beside the bed, on which I could now see a tall form was stretched.

The head and face were evidently those of a man. A black bandage passed over the face and under the chin. The eyes were closed, and one hand lay on the covering of the bed. I approached and took it in mine.

Imagine my surprise when I touched the hand of a corpse.

"Here is no hope," said I, "the man is dead."

The stranger sprang to her feet, clasped her hands wildly together, and cried in a piercing voice:

"Not so! Say not so! I cannot bear it! It cannot be so! Men have been brought to life when they were supposed to be dead. I beseech you, do not delay! At this very moment, perhaps, the soul is departing from the body! For heaven's sake, do something for him!"

"With these words she threw herself on the body, and with trembling haste began to rub his breast, hands and forehead by turns; but as she released the hands I perceived they fell heavily on the bed, with a lifeless weight.

In the meantime I had examined the man's breast carefully with my hands, but could perceive neither warmth nor motion.

I stooped down to examine the body more closely.

"Draw away the curtain," said I.

The woman did not move.

"The curtain must be moved," said I, peremptorily.

Still she made no motion, and I rose for the purpose of doing it myself.

Then she threw herself upon the bed, clasped my knees and cried out:

"Have mercy on me! Let the curtain be! If there is no hope—if he is indeed dead—if nothing can be done for him, why expose the body?"

"I must see the corpse," said I, and before the woman could prevent me I tore away the curtain. The daylight streamed into the chamber.

I returned to the bed and examined the dead body. "Here has been violence," said I, and looked sharply at the woman, who stood before me for the first time without her veil. It had fallen to the floor, but she appeared unconscious of it. She appeared to be about fifty years old.

Her face, now deadly pale, might have once been very handsome. Her white lips trembled, an unnatural fire burned in her eyes, and her whole person seemed oppressed by a weight of woe.

"Here has been violence," I repeated.

"There has," replied the woman.

"There has!" exclaimed I, sternly. "I mean the man has been murdered!"

"Yes, Heaven knows he has! Merciless men have murdered him!" shrieked the woman.

"And who are they?" said I, seizing her by the arm.

"Who are they? Look at the mark of the slaughterers and then ask!" said she.

I stooped down and took off the black bandage. The neck was swollen, and a blue mark might be plainly seen around it. I could doubt no longer, and turning away, I said: "Is he one of the men who were hung this morning?"

"Yes," answered she.

"And who is he?"

"My own—son!" groaned out the woman, and sank on the floor.

The doctor gave the explanation and conclusion of his story in a few words, as follows:

This man was the only child of his widowed mother—the light of her eyes and the idol of her heart. Indulgence had made him selfish and heartless. He had robbed her of all her possessions, one after another; and when she could no longer furnish him with the means of gratification he committed robbery and died on the gallows. His mother finished her days in a madhouse.

"Why is it," asked the fox, "that you always look so gaunt?"

"Oh!" replied the wolf, "it's all due to the business I'm in. I always have to keep away from the door until there's nothing left in the house to eat."

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| " " FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY, Nos..... | |
| " " Ten-Cent Hand Books, Nos..... | |

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....